GUARDIAN WEEKLY
January 5 1997

Football Premiership: Newcastle United 7 Tottenham Hotspur 1

Magpies soar to seventh heaven

Michael Walker

HE MUST have loved it, loved it. With the doubters gathering to spout on the television screens and unprecedented criticism being whispered on the banks of the Tyne, Kevin Keegan needed a performance from his players to restore the faithful's belief.

Seven games without a win had seen some of that eroded, but Keegan's players delivered. Few could have foreseen that the restoration last Saturday would come in such flamboyant, evangelising style.

Seven goals, though, offer a powerful argument about the talents at Keegan's disposal and victory over Leeds this week would bring a return of expectation to add to the renewal of faith.

The score suggests that Walker, in the Tottenham goal, had a poor game, but that was far from the case. Had he not shown so much agility Newcastle could have had 14. That said, Tottenham could have scored five themselves, but they only managed one, and so late that it was of little significance and no consolation. For the record, Nielsen scuffed one with a minute to go.

Had Sheringham been so fortunately placed many, many minutes earlier the day's script could have been markedly different. But even when the England striker did get a sound connection to a Fox cross, Hislop, in for the dropped Srnicek, blocked relatively easily.

That was in the 22nd minute, by which time Spurs were one down and seconds away from conceding another. It could be argued, therefore, that Hislop's save was a pivotal moment.

On the other hand, Newcastle were into a magnificently carefree yet skilful stride. After a frustrating, disjointed opening, Shearer sparked the renaissance in the 20th minute. He galloped on to a flick by Ferdinand, nicked the ball over Carr, ran round him, past Calderwood and Campbell, and then lobbed the ball over Walker. Sheer brilliance is an overworked headline about the world's most expensive player, but in this context using it again is justifiable.

Galvanised and relieved, Newcastle were now bombing forward, impressively controlled, and within two minutes they were two up. Ferdinand started and finished a move that featured a cross from Gillespie, a miskick from Lee and a blast from Beardsley that Ferdinand diverted past Walker from inside the six-yard box. The Londoners then disappeared, not to re-emerge until midway through the second half.

Only Walker stood out, an indication of Newcastle's overwhelming pressure. Before half-time, the Tottenham keeper made a vital stop from Ferdinand, put clean through by an incisive Beardsley pass. Then he watched as a Ferdinand header brushed the side-netting and a Beardsley volley was deflected over the bar.

Newcastle could have been five up by the break and immediately afterwards they should have had a third, but Shearer volleyed Albert's curling left-foot cross just wide. A third was not long in coming, however. On the hour, an almost identical build-up ended with Ferdinand rushing in to knock Beresford's centre beyond the unprotected Walker.

With Spurs now a ragged impression of a football team, Lee ran unchallenged for 40 yards before jinking past Carr and placing the ball into the bottom corner. He would have had another shortly after but for a spectacular fingertip save from Walker.

Lee then set up a fifth goal with a neat side-foot pass that allowed Albert calmly to slide the ball home. And when Shearer swivelled sharply to drive in a sixth, Spurs had conceded six for the second time in just over a month. Even then there was more to come, Lee getting his second and Newcastle's seventh with the Tottenham defence again in disarray — *The Observer*



Back on song . . . Shearer scores his second and Newcastle's sixth in their 7-1 demolition of Spurs PHOTOGRAPH OWEN HUMPHREYS

Grand time for old pro Shilton

Richard Williams

IT WAS probably the easiest day of his professional life. On his 1,000th appearance in English league football, an unprecedented feat unlikely to be matched, 47-year-old Peter Shilton was called to produce not a single one of the flying fingertip saves or prodigious leaping catches with which he made his reputation as a teenager.

In a battle between clubs at the bottom of the Third Division, Shilton kept Brighton and Hove Albion at bay to help earn a 2-0 win for his club, Leyton Orient. He fielded half a dozen overhit long balls, gathered a couple of headed backpasses, caught an inswinging corner and punched away another.

For the rest, he trotted back and forth across his penalty area, periodically touching his toes, keeping himself alert, maintaining the good professional habits that began a lifetime ago, when Harold Wilson was prime minister.

It may have been a long way from the floodlit nights on which he won two European Cup winners' medals with Brian Clough's Nottingham Forest, or the 125 England caps amassed during a 19-year international career under Ramsey, Revie, Greenwood and Robson, but there were fanfares before the kick-off and, at the end, an ovation from the 7,944 spectators, almost double the usual number at Brisbane Road.

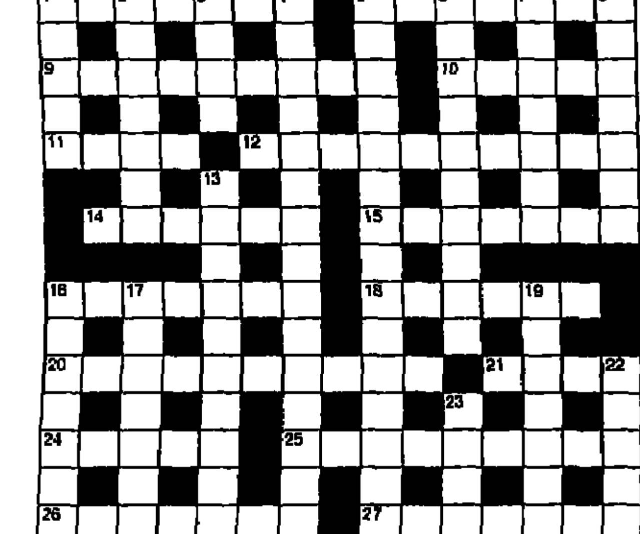
"I've played to bigger audiences," Shilton said afterwards, "but the atmosphere here today was fantastic. I've been very pleasantly surprised by the amount of interest in the game. I wasn't expecting anything like this."

Shilton earned £8 a week when he joined Leicester City as a 16-year-old understudy to the great Gordon Banks. His obsession with the craft of goalkeeping, encouraged by a mother who hung him from the bannisters to lengthen his arms, marked him out from his rivals, and before long he had replaced Banks with both club and country.



Super saver: Shilton at 47

Cryptic crossword *by Pasquale*



Across

1 To mother an insect is a monster (7)
5 Little girl faces the bowling — comes back hurt (7)
9 Be more than senseless when pinned by arrow shot? (9)
10 See 11
11,10 What may doubly help the stressed and hard-up teacher? (4,5)
12 One may take exceptional care to secure politician gain possibly (10)
14 Man caught by England player (Bill or John?), last out (6)
15 Staying behind, phony giant gee-gee is getting in (7)
16 Conservative Society about to present one with disdainful attitude (7)
18 Girl is English, upper-class and pleasant (6)
20 Finicky with detail (10)
21 Bee line made for hilltop (4)
24 Proposition learner's found at front of book (5)
25 A welcome with fellows in concord (9)
26 After accident tankers may be most noxious (7)
27 Sea creature pitches on land in the absence of rain (7)

Down

1 Cook's accomplice again wants extra egg (5)
2 Variety of items as shown by artist (7)
3 Paper round is taken up as a duty (4)
4 A botch-up Caesar's put right with humanitarian legislation (6,6,3)
5 Use one's last resources to get gunge out of rifle? (6,3,6)
6 Checking blood flow that's severe (10)
7 Polish upset having a foreign princess in the country (7)
8 One shut up in a boring job — helps with the washing up (7)
13 Extravagant chatter about golf I played (10)
16 Distributor unable to accommodate one should be more flexible (7)
17 One in boat moans terribly about a river (7)
19 Present-day split initiated by contemptible type (7)
22 Rebel ruler of Britain sinking in the sea? (5)
23 A four-letter word you may come across with bovver boys (4)

Last week's solution

Southmpton 0 Liverpool 1

Barnes gets belated gift

LIVERPOOL entered the new year with a five-point lead and as the 13-8 favourites to win the title, *writes Paul Weaver.* But they achieved all this with a performance at The Dell last Sunday which can only galvanise their rivals with fresh hope.

They won through a shocking goalkeeping error that will probably find its way into one of those video blooper compilations in time for next year's Christmas stockings.

It was a soft goal that gave Liverpool victory over Southampton at Anfield in September but nothing quite so bizarre as the 77th-minute effort by John Barnes.

Southampton's goalkeeper Dave Bensant raced beyond the right edge of his area but his rushed clearance sent the ball to Barnes, just inside the Saints half. It was estimated that he was 43 yards out when his shot, not cleanly struck, sent the ball bobbling narrowly inside the right post as the forlorn, scrambling Beasant lunged back across his own goal-line.

The goal was a fluke, as Barnes happily admitted: "We were atrocious in the first half. We couldn't string two passes together. We were lucky today. But we are fighting and making wins out of draws, and that is what winning championships is all about."

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The Washington Post · Le Monde

Noam Friedman, who shot and wounded seven Palestinians in a Hebron market place last week, is dragged away under arrest by Israeli soldiers. The incident failed to disrupt talks on the partial Israeli troop pullout of Hebron, although the delay in reaching agreement is raising tension

Tangled strands of an old conflict

COMMENT
Ian Black

NEGOTIATING a deal for Hebron has taken on the classic contours of Middle Eastern carpet haggling: when the price finally seems right the buyer stalks off in a huff, though the merchant knows full well that the reluctant customer will be back.

Hebron is the last of the seven West Bank towns due to be evacuated by the Israelis, who occupied them in the 1967 Middle East war. They were supposed to go last March, but arranging Hebron's future has never been a straightforward transaction, because it is only a small part of a much bigger game in which the stakes are far higher.

It is what happens next that makes closing the deal so very hard, for Hebron has become a vital test of good faith. Will the rightwing Likud prime minister, Binyamin Netanyahu, live up to the spirit and letter of the Oslo accords signed by Yitzhak Rabin, his murdered Labour predecessor? Or will he sign on the dotted line and then bury the peace process? Faced with that very big question, Hebron itself is a detail.

"The problem of Hebron is very serious," said Noam Arnon, a leader of the Jewish settlers in the city. "But [it] is only the first break in the dike. When it's broken the flood may endanger all the country."

Abdel-Razak Yahyah, one of the Palestinian negotiating team, agrees. "The problem is what comes after Hebron."

Hebron is difficult, because 400 armed and fanatical Jewish settlers live in the heart of a Muslim city that is a byword for bloody intolerance. Religious Jews believe the Cave of Machpelah was bought by the patriarch Abraham as a burial place for his wife. The Tomb of the Patriarchs is also a holy site for Muslims, who call it the Haram al-Ibrahimi. In 1929 scores of the city's Jews were murdered after riots over prayer rights spread from Jerusalem.

In February 1994, just months after the Oslo deal, Baruch Goldstein, a Jew from the nearby settlement of Kiryat Arba, massacred 29 Palestinians at prayer at the al-Ibrahimi mosque.

Leaving Hebron requires Mr Netanyahu to do what he has always been reluctant to do: co-operate fully with the Palestinians; face a strategic choice about his true goals; and grasp the nettle of opposition from his own supporters.

Some of them, such as Noam Friedman, the young soldier who opened fire on New Year's Day, hope that violence will stop not only the Hebron deal but the entire peace process.

Talks about Hebron were suspended by Rabin's successor, Shimon Peres; got stuck on Mr Netanyahu's demands for better protection for the settlers; and almost foundered on the right of Israeli hot pursuit, which is seen by the Palestinians as an unacceptable precedent.

According to the interim agreement of September 1995 (Oslo 2), the withdrawal from Hebron should be followed by three further troop redeployments at six-monthly intervals. Crucially, however, there is no agreement on what these should be, beyond the understanding that settlements and military areas — both notoriously flexible terms in Israeli interpretation — should be excluded.

The first should have taken place by last September, so the next stage is already delayed. Palestinians believe that the Israeli pullbacks should leave them in control of 70 per cent of the West Bank, instead of the current 4 per cent. That would go a long way towards achieving the independence that critics of the Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat, say he has been cheated out of.

Disagreements are also evident over the extension of Palestinian security powers in areas where they now patrol jointly with the Israelis.

In addition, the Palestinians want Israel to set dates for releasing prisoners, fulfil its promise to allow a Palestinian airport to open in the Gaza Strip, and open a road linking the Strip and the West Bank autonomous areas.

Mr Netanyahu wants Mr Arafat to disarm terrorists, cease all Palestinian Authority activities in Jerusalem, extradite wanted prisoners to Israel, and assure Israel that it has annulled all offensive clauses in the Palestine National Covenant.

Most experts believe Hebron can be cracked, especially with the degree of US pressure now being brought to bear. But many questions remain unanswered. "It would be nice to think this is a turning point and that Netanyahu would realise this is the way forward," said one diplomat.

"Does Netanyahu become part of the peace bloc as a result of Hebron? Or does he remain part of the resistance to the Oslo process . . . who has signed an agreement to get everyone off his back?"

Fortress Europe's allure proves fatal

John Hooper in Rome

ILLEGAL immigrants last weekend gave harrowing accounts of a collision at sea, which, according to their testimony to Greek authorities, claimed almost 300 lives on Christmas Day.

The immigrants say the victims died after they were forced at gunpoint on to another vessel in rough seas between Sicily and Malta. But air and sea rescue officials in Italy and Malta had found no corpses or wreckage after days of searching. An official in Greece's public order ministry said privately that he doubted the immigrants' account. "They are probably seeking sympathy because they realise they will be deported," he said.

For almost a decade now, men, women and sometimes children from the Third World have been risking their lives to cross the moat around "Fortress Europe". Many have died in the attempt.

Last year, Abdelaziz Fellah Boughaba was jailed for four years for owning a fishing boat that sank as it carried 26 fellow Moroccans across the Straits of Gibraltar to a promised new life in Spain. They had each paid 4,000 dirhams ($450). None survived.

The waters between the Rock and north Africa are among the most perilous in the world. Mountains either side of the Straits form a wind tunnel and, in the waters below, Atlantic currents collide with those of the Mediterranean to form unpredictable eddies. From time to time, Spanish police and Civil Guards find bodies washed up on the beaches. But they rarely find the inshore fishing boats or *pateras* on which the north Africans embark.

To the east, their counterparts in the Carabinieri and the Italian revenue guard seldom find bodies. The route from Morocco into Spain may be hazardous, but at their narrowest the Straits are only 13km wide.

The routes from north Africa to Sicily and its outlying islands, on the other hand, are considerable journeys. Even reaching that far-flung splinter of Europe, the island of Lampedusa, between Malta and Tunisia, involves a journey of up to 10 hours for a small fishing vessel.

Boats have been dashed against the rocks of Lampedusa and other Italian islands. But if any have sunk on the high seas, it is more than likely that the bodies of the victims sank before reaching shore.

For much of the month before Christmas, seas in the area were so rough that the ferry from Lampedusa to Sicily was unable to make its usual journey. Yet during that period, more than 30 illegal immigrants were detained on the island after crossing from Tunisia.

A combination of factors is channelling a growing number of immigrants across the central Mediterranean, regardless of the risks. One factor is a crackdown on illegal immigration by the new rightwing government in Spain. Another is the more tolerant attitude taken by Italy's new centre-left administration. Under Italian law, it is not a crime to try to enter the country without permission. Those who are caught are merely served with an expulsion order and set free.

A third factor is the constriction of the route into Europe through the Balkans to Albania and from there to the coast of Puglia, Italy's "heel". Here, the traffic in hopes for a better life was carried out aboard high-speed launches of the sort normally used in the Mediterranean for tobacco and drug smuggling.

Last year, after the number roaring across the Adriatic grew to epidemic proportions, talks between Rome and Tirana — and a reported promise of increased aid from Italy — led to a clampdown by the Albanians. This was the route that most immigrants from beyond the Mediterranean basin were using. Italian law enforcement officers said that among those caught were Kurds, Filipinos, and immigrants from the Indian sub-continent.

Whereas the most that north Africans pay is around $650 — the going rate for a crossing from Tunisia to Lampedusa — Easterners have to fund a journey halfway round the world. They expect a safer ride on the last leg of their trip into Europe itself.

That is the tragic irony of what Athens said had happened. According to the Greek marine ministry, the victims were from India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The Sri Lankans had paid out $8,000 each and the others $5,000 for a package that included an air fare to Cairo as a first stage.

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Japan's trade gloss fades 25

Austria	AS30	Malta	50c
Belgium	BF75	Netherlands	G 4.75
Denmark	DK16	Norway	NK 16
Finland	FM 10	Portugal	E300
France	FF 13	Saudi Arabia	SR 6.50
Germany	DM 4	Spain	P 300
Greece	DR 450	Sweden	SK 19
Italy	L 3,000	Switzerland	SF 3.30

Human beings need to learn a little humility

"*THERE* is no sentiment in the animal world," says Keith Matthews (December 15). But some humans at least have sentiments, and humans are part of the animal world.

Matthews adds that "humans have the sole responsibility of maintaining a balance of nature" — also debatable. Nature is a vague abstract concept, not a concrete entity, and ecosystems change over time regardless of human intervention. So this responsibility is extremely difficult to define, let alone discharge.

Also, as humans are primarily responsible for destabilising the "balance of nature", taking Matthews's view to its logical conclusion would also entail removing cuddly humans, however lovable they appear, from environments in which they have displaced indigenous species.

Tim Morey (December 15) makes a philosophical argument for treating humans as individuals worthy of respect due to their intrinsic value, while not extending this respect to non-humans. The problem here is that a lot of humans don't meet his conditions of being "a conscious, thinking creature, with desires and reflective ability", while many non-humans do.

Philosophy aside, other animals are individuals and they deserve a measure of respect as our differently sentient cousins. They should be given consideration according to their individual needs. Treating them as objects that have no value other than in the eye of the human beholder leads to as much absurdity and confusion as when considering them human.

If we could develop a general consensus that placed less effort on justifying killing and more on avoiding it, we would have a happier, more civilised society. At the same time, we might try dropping the ridiculous pretense that humans have the capability, let alone the right, to manage the biosphere.
Tim Groves
Kyoto, Japan

THE TERM "humanity" is, quite rightly, a term that represents all that we aim for and value. But it does not imply that the things we value are not found elsewhere in nature. We did not get to be human by ourselves, out of nowhere. We have not got a monopoly on many valuable elements, such as kindness and affection. Anyone who has had any contact at all with the other social mammals must be well aware of that.

To judge an animal by the act of killing alone is to judge a cuddly human baby by the fact that some grew up to drop the bomb on Hiroshima. Surely the point should be that injury and killing *matters*, and that we ought to avoid it when no adequate reason justifies it.

We are entitled to look after our own species as all other species do, but to indiscriminately destroy and abuse all that is not classified as human is, to my mind, as evil as allowing the exploitation and destruction of "slaves", "savages" and "women".

Humans, like the other species on the planet, are equipped and have evolved to live alongside the other sensitive and intelligent species on earth. We are not separate from nature, we are part of it.
Marisa Poggioli,
Groppallo, Piacenza, Italy

Fairy tales in the Falklands

JOHN EZARD'S tirade against what he perceives to be a war of fairy stories smacks of jingoism (Falkland islanders reply in kind to Argentine charm offensive, December 22). Surely neither he nor your headline writer can have read the book with an open mind? For had this been the case, he would surely have discovered that the esoteric value of this beautiful little creation has a far greater depth than his interpretation of a hero seeking sheep muzzles to protect his rose. And the headline might have been more in keeping with the very deep philosophy expressed by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's little book than with the abhorrently jingoistic political inheritance of the Thatcher era.

Those who were responsible for the widespread death and destruction wrought in the Falkland Islands did not come only from Argentina. Whether Argentine or British, those with the mentality capable of starting and sustaining a war that took hundreds of lives should consider carefully before damning any overtures intended to show their children that there are more ways to solve problems than the solution they themselves tried — making war.

If giving a child this beautiful little book to read is considered a "Trojan horse", then what do those same people say about the New Testament's message to "love thy neighbour"?
Brian Millington,
Baar, Switzerland

JOHN EZARD speculates on why the Argentine foreign minister has sent children on the Falkland Islands a copy of The Little Prince. Who can tell? I note that Antoine de *Saint-Exupéry flew the first airmail* service in Argentina. There is a plaque commemorating this feat inside the terminal building at Rio Gallegos airport. The airport was used by Argentine jet fighters during the Falklands war. For me, therefore, this Christmas present conveys a warning rather than joy.
Richard Travers,
Melbourne, Australia

Racism's abuse of human rights

YASMIN Alibhai-Brown (Black looks and white lies, December 22) is quite right to condemn the racism that is all too endemic in the United Kingdom. But to its credit, the UK differs from many of its European Union partners in at least providing the minimal human right of citizenship — and with it the legal right to sue for equal treatment with all other citizens.

I have a Turkish friend who was born and raised in Berlin, whose dominant language is German, and whose view of the world is German. After going to Turkey as an adult to study Turkish (as a foreign language), she was denied the right to return to the city of her birth even on a tourist visa because, she was told, "foreigners like you are likely to come and hide illegally, since you are so invisible".

While Ms Alibhai-Brown, as a child of the UK, can be indignant on how she is treated as a British citizen, Germany does not even permit the granting of citizenship to children like her, even if they are born on German soil and, rightfully, think of it as their home.

Racism is a Europe-wide phenomenon which must be tackled at a European level, beginning with the simple act of Europe granting citizenship to its children. All of them.
Craig Volker,
Hashima-gun, Japan

THE ESSAY by Yasmin Alibhai-Brown and the reaction to it, set me thinking about my own experience of the "system".

I grew up in Dagenham, where my father also once worked at Ford's factory. Unlike the supervisor quoted in the article, I was fortunate enough to go to grammar school and get a university degree. But the first lesson I learned at my new school was that a Dagenham accent was going to be a serious hindrance in the world where other children's fathers wore suits to work and where everybody spoke like BBC announcers. It was relatively easy to change my accent; luckily, the working class have the same skin tone as everyone else.
W George,
Rinteln, Germany

Little merit in UN choice

WAS Kofi Annan really the best candidate to be the next United Nations secretary-general (Kofi Annan to be lead UN into next century, December 22)? The UN is an organisation where political correctness has replaced open competition and merit as a basis for staff appointments. Five years ago, Boutros Boutros-Ghali was elected secretary-general because it was an African's turn to lead the world body. And since most past UN chiefs have had at least two successive terms, it was either Dr Boutros-Ghali or another African.

The rather pathetic UN response to mass killings in Rwanda in 1994 was just one case that reflected Dr Boutros-Ghali's mediocre leadership. The knowledge that the secretary-general was an African was no comfort to the relatives of the millions of people killed.
Wilbert Mukori,
London

THERE is an urgent need to ensure that, in future, senior UN posts are filled through a proper selection process — rather than through the disgraceful behaviour of the US government last year and the bullying of the other members of the UN Security Council.

Dr Boutros-Ghali worked tirelessly to persuade the Security Council to live up to its responsibilities in relation to Rwanda, Angola, Western Sahara, Somalia and other crisis areas in Africa, and gave much support to the West African peace initiative in Liberia. He really cannot be blamed if the results were less comprehensive than they should have been.

In these crises, he was very ably supported by Kofi Annan, as head of the UN Peacekeeping Department. Although the method of selection may have left much to be desired, Mr Annan was an excellent candidate and will serve the peoples of the world most ably as UN secretary-general.
Malcolm Harper,
Director, United Nations Association,
London

Briefly

ONE can see why Laurens van der Post was treasured as a thinker by the Prince of Wales. The same Jungian and holistic subtlety that enabled him to take a Thatcher knighthood, oppose sanctions and uphold that protégé of apartheid, Chief Buthelezi, has enabled the Prince to let himself be used to promote British arms sales to autocratic regimes.
John Wardroper
London

NOT ONLY was the content of "Expatriate Games" (January 5) a rehash of ancient history but the language was juvenile and the use of English abominable.

Nothing was said about the vast majority of perfectly happy and well-adjusted single people and families here. No reference to basketball games, football and baseball. And the natural beauty of the country along with other outdoors activities such as camping were things your journalists chose to ignore.
Justin M E Martin,
King Faisal Specialist Hospital and Research Centre, Riyadh,
Saudi Arabia

GIVEN the present climate of concern and repudiation over the international child sex trade, I read with astonishment the article concerning teenage prostitution in Japan (Schoolgirls pander to the Lolita fantasy, December 8).

The benevolent and even congratulatory tone of Philippe Pons's article seems to suggest that these are liberated young women rebelling against years of sexual repression. Were the subjects of the article to have been 15-year-olds on the streets of Paris, London or Milan, I wonder whether the author's attitude might not have been different?
Kirsten King,
Veronella, Italy

ARE Messrs Kohl and Chirac trying to buy votes for their monetary union by arranging for the British electorate to have four weeks' holiday and other goodies, or have they decided they are fed up with the British and want to provoke us to clear out by trying to ruin our competitiveness?
R W Bouldstridge,
Barcelona, Spain

ONCE the IRA declares another permanent ceasefire, all parties in the negotiating talks should accept the IRA's intention and bring Sinn Fein into the talks, because without Sinn Fein any agreement will not be able to claim to incorporate the views of all constituencies in Northern Ireland.
Corbin M Wright,
Buenos Aires, Argentina

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Belgrade brought to a standstill

Julian Borger, and agencies in Belgrade

OPPONENTS of the Serbian president, Slobodan Milosevic, marked the Orthodox Christmas Eve by bringing Belgrade city centre to a standstill on Monday with their biggest democracy demonstration so far, on a day when the Yugoslav army commander offered a veiled but unmistakable gesture of support to the protesters.

The army chief of staff, General Momcilo Perisic, spoke to the student protesters for more than an hour at his Belgrade headquarters, and later issued a statement calling for a democratic solution to Serbia's seven-week political crisis.

The statement conspicuously avoided any expression of support for President Milosevic who has faced protests since his annulment of victories by the opposition in local elections held on November 17.

"General Perisic underlined the Yugoslav army's . . . special interest in seeing that all current problems are overcome within the legal institutions of the system in a manner deployed in democratic countries," it said. It added that such an approach was essential if Serbia was to secure re-entry to the international community.

"We have never, never seen such a crowd in Belgrade," a traffic policeman said as the demonstrators converged on Republic Square and marched to St Sava's cathedral for midnight mass, conducted by the Serbian Patriarch, Pavle.

Mr Milosevic lost another ally last week when the Serbian Orthodox Church accused him of "stifling political and religious freedoms" and "falsifying" votes, in an unprecedented gesture of support for the marathon pro-democracy campaign.

The Church was a staunch supporter of the Serbian cause in the Croatian and Bosnian wars, and has hitherto ventured only the mildest of criticisms of the Milosevic regime. Loss of Church approval is a serious blow for the regime. Almost all Serbs owe at least nominal allegiance to the Orthodox Church, which is at the core of Serbia's sense of national identity.

But diplomats say Mr Milosevic decided long ago to allow the army and the Church — the traditional pillars of the state — to wither, and rely on the 80,000-strong police force, the state media and a network of semi-legal business groups. Those remaining props still appear to be solid.

The opposition Zajedno (Together) movement has mustered up to 250,000 people at protests, but witnesses said this figure was definitely exceeded on Monday. It was the 50th consecutive day of marching in the Serb capital in protest at government election-rigging, and there was a festive atmosphere, with people blowing whistles and trumpets and streets packed for miles with demonstrators.

A few blocks from the marchers, an explosion broke some windows but caused no injuries. The blast occurred in front of the offices of the Yugoslav United Left (JUL), Mr Milosevic's coalition partner headed by his wife, Mirjana Markovic. Zajedno leaders denied involvement in the bombing.

Zoran Djindjic, a Zajedno leader, revealed a new tactic to step up pressure on the government: "On Tuesday and Wednesday you will get lists of all telephone numbers of all state institutions: ministries, state TV and radio, Tanjug, and others. Call them from dawn until dusk — block their phones for 24 hours — the less they work the less harm will be done to this country."

Dusan Vasiljevic, one of the students in a delegation that met the army commander, said that from Thursday the students — who have been holding their own daily protests — would no longer back off when confronted by police.

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Washington Post, page 15

Siberian chill grips Europe

Paul Webster in Paris

THE death toll topped 220 last weekend as the big freeze from Siberia kept its week-long grip on Europe, with temperatures at around -10C across a broad belt of the continent.

Bonn's gravediggers complained of having to use pneumatic drills in up to 50 centimetres of frozen earth. And in Belgium, a lorry driver who tried to thaw his fuel tank with a blow torch ended up making a vast chocolate fondue when the diesel caught fire and melted the load of Belgian chocolates. But it was France that seemed the least prepared for the cold spell, which hit rail services, motorways and canals while revealing the inadequacy of protection for the homeless.

Ice brought much of France's TGV high-speed rail system to a halt, adding to traffic chaos caused by snowfalls, particularly in the southeast. About 10,000 passengers had to spend a night in trains, stations and temporary refuges because ice on overhead cables brought at least 30 trains to a halt.

SNCF, the French national railway, lacks the technology to cope with iced-up power lines, underlining the state system's financial problems as pressure grows for privatisation.

The death toll from the cold in France, which reached -22C in the centre of the country, stood at 23 last weekend. Most were homeless men sleeping in rough, unheated conditions. More deaths from the cold have been reported in France than any other Western country, though 43 Romanians and 40 Poles have died.

The Danube remained closed to shipping from Germany through Austria to Slovakia, with bargemen waiting for icebreakers to release their stranded vessels.

In the Russian Caucasus, emergency workers battled against strong winds, blizzards and fog to clear snowdrifts that have blocked some 30 drivers for a week in the Roksky tunnel, which links Russia with Georgia.

Comment, page 12

Hole story . . . Illegal Indonesian immigrants leave Malaysia by sea last week. One thousand were deported after being given three months to get proper documents to stay PHOTOGRAPH JIMIN LAI

Fujimori plans to wear down rebels

Jane Díaz-Limaco in Lima

THE Peruvian government has apparently chosen a strategy of wearing down to exhaustion the Tupac Amaru rebels who are holding 74 hostages in the Japanese ambassador's residence in Lima. The crisis, which began on December 17, has taken on a slower pace since New Year's Day, when the rebels last released a hostage.

The government's chief negotiator, Domingo Palermo, has rejected direct talks with Tupac Amaru until they softened their stance. He was quoted in the Lima daily El Comercio as saying he would not meet the rebels without a "clear sign" they wanted dialogue. The government has only negotiated directly with the rebels once.

The stalemate has dulled expectations of a rapid conclusion to the crisis. In the first two weeks of the siege, the rebels released hostages almost daily.

Visits by the main Red Cross mediator, Michel Minnig, and Archbishop Juan Luis Cipriani, a close ally of President Alberto Fujimori, have continued, but less frequently.

The lack of developments has left much room for speculation. The Lima media seized on a letter signed by four opposition MPs that appeared to back taking the residence by force. The letter said all *possibilities of rescuing* the hostages must be explored. But it added: "If that possibility is denied and the price demanded [by the rebels] is the destruction of law and security, then the national interest should come first."

One of the signatories, the People's Action Party leader Lourdes Flores, said the letter stressed that the government should refuse rebel demands for the freeing of prisoners. But most analysts said the option of storming the residence was extremely remote.

Raul González, a specialist in security matters, said: "The military option has been ruled out." The threat of force might be employed as a negotiating tactic, but was an option only if the rebels harmed any of the hostages, something they seem unlikely to do, he said.

The government and Tupac Amaru rebels have one point in common — that it would be in neither's interests for the siege to end in bloodshed. With the audacious seizure of hostages from more than 25 countries, and images of rebels who treat their captives with care, the guerrillas have achieved a publicity coup they cannot afford to squander, Mr González said.

The fact that 19 Japanese diplomats and businessmen were still in the residence was another strong argument against an armed assault. As long as the hostages remained unharmed, Tokyo, which has a history of negotiating with kidnappers, would strongly object to the military option.

Although the rebel commando leader, Néstor Cerpa, has said he is in no hurry to resolve the stand-off, a retired general, José Pastor, said the strategy of drawing out negotiations would play in the government's favour. "I think the government is applying the correct strategy, that of exhaustion. I think this will continue until the terrorists are physically and mentally worn out and they reach a solution that is favourable to the government."

Le Monde, page 13

Fight goes on says Suu Kyi

Nick Cumming-Bruce in Bangkok

WITH a ringing affirmation of her determination to continue the struggle for democracy, the Burmese opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi has set the scene for a year of living dangerously with the military junta.

"*We are going to continue with* the work which we have set for ourselves, which is to achieve democracy for Burma," she told a news conference last weekend to mark Burma's independence day.

"My father did not give up his life that Burma might be crushed under the military's boot. He gave up his life that Burma might be free."

Aung San, the national hero, was murdered just as he was leading the country to independence from Britain.

More unusual than her words was that Ms Suu Kyi was allowed to deliver her speech to an audience of about 1,500 outside her home. For the past three months the security forces have closed the road to prevent crowds gathering for the speeches she used to deliver every weekend.

For a month, since students took to the streets in anti-government demonstrations, the authorities have in effect kept her confined in her house, where she spent six years' detention.

The concession was almost certainly less a gesture of reconciliation than a measure of window dressing. Even as her audience was assembling, the head of the junta, General Tan Shwe, urged the Burmese to "oppose instigations and attempts by destructionists" — the junta's word for all opposition, from Ms Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) to student dissidents, ethnic minority rebels and hostile exiles.

The security forces are still seeking those responsible for two bomb blasts near a Buddhist shrine on Christmas Day which killed five people and wounded 17. The security forces blame ethnic minorities and exiled dissidents, but say they have not ruled out an NLD connection.

The NLD said at the weekend that more than 100 people had been arrested by the junta on political grounds in the past two months.

E-mail Weekly

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GUARDIAN WEEKLY
January 12 1997

The Week

THE decision by Cyprus to buy surface-to-air missiles in Russia could result in a dramatic shift in the military balance on the island, already one of the most heavily militarised places in the world, diplomats said.

EIGHT Libyans, accused of attempting to overthrow Colonel Muammar Gadafy, were executed after being found guilty of spying with equipment supplied by the CIA.

THE worst storms to hit the West Coast of the United States for decades killed 15 people, submerged large tracts of Seattle and caused widespread damage to roads and property.
Washington Post, page 16

THE Swiss president, Jean-Pascal Delamuraz, said calls for Berne to set up a compensation fund for Jews who might be entitled to money left in Swiss banks after the Holocaust amounted to "blackmail".

THE International Press Institute said a fall in the *number of journalists killed* was one of the few bright spots for press freedom last year. A total of 38 died — compared with 52 in 1995 — 11 in Algeria and seven in Russia.

INDONESIA'S policy of forcibly resettling people from densely populated islands came under the spotlight after days of ethnic violence between tribespeople and migrants in the province of West Kalimantan, in the Indonesian part of Borneo.

NEWT GINGRICH looks set for a narrow victory in elections for Speaker of the House, but the atmosphere in Congress is now poisonous, and leaves little hope for the common ground promised by President Bill Clinton and Republican leaders.

THE WORLD Council of Churches accused Nigeria's military regime of widespread *oppression in oil-rich Ogoniland*, and attacked the Shell oil company for causing environmental devastation there.

THE Canadian government apologised to former prime minister Brian Mulroney for suggesting that he took bribes for an aircraft contract, averting an unprecedented libel trial.

SOUTH KOREAN union leaders say they will not appear before state prosecutors, defying summonses issued on the orders of President Kim Young-sam.

A STUDY by researchers at Helsinki university found that the production of normal sperm for men halved in 10 years: in 1981 normal sperm was being produced by 56.4 per cent of men, by 1991 this was happening in only 26.9 per cent.

Yeltsin stands firm on Nato

David Hearst in Moscow

RUSSIA dampened speculation that it is on the verge of agreeing to the eastward expansion of Nato by issuing an unusually bleak assessment on Monday of a weekend summit between President Boris Yeltsin and his closest Western ally, the German chancellor, Helmut Kohl.

It made it starkly clear that while Russia is willing to continue the talks, its hostility has not slackened.

The presidential spokesman, Sergei Yastrzembsky, issued the statement. He said: "There is a well-known divergence in Russia's position on the one hand and Germany and the other members of the North Atlantic alliance on the other on these issues . . . Boris Yeltsin clearly, precisely and fairly toughly laid out Russia's position and concern about the consequences of possible Nato expansion to the east."

The foreign ministry backed up this diplomatic slap in the face with an optimistic assessment of Russia's growing relationship with China. The senior ministry spokesman, Georgi Karasin, said Russia was aiming for "strategic co-operation" with Beijing, based not on power blocs but on mutual interest.

China shares Russia's mistrust of Nato, and the Chinese president, Jiang Zemin, is expected to make a state visit in April.

Mr Kohl's one-day visit was intended to be as much a gesture of support for Mr Yeltsin, still visibly weak after his heart operation last November, as a preparation for an important Nato meeting in July.

The two leaders met at Brezhnev's old hunting lodge, Rus, in Zavidovo, 100km west of Moscow. Much has been said about the close personal relationship between the two men, and before leaving Moscow last Saturday Mr Kohl gave a more optimistic interpretation of the talks.

"There are still some differences of opinion, but we evaluated a couple of ideas which I will discuss with my Nato colleagues over the next couple of days on the telephone."

Last month Nato foreign ministers agreed to issue invitations in July to the first former Warsaw Pact countries to join the alliance. They are expected to be Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic. Russia was promised more say in the new security apparatus.

Western diplomats at the Nato headquarters in Brussels and in Moscow interpreted a recent spate of conflicting signals from the Kremlin as imminent acquiescence in the principle of Nato expansion.

They argued that Russia had tacitly acknowledged that it could do nothing in practice to prevent Poland joining Nato, and was playing for guarantees concerning other states more sensitive to Moscow, such as Ukraine and the Baltics.

Russian foreign policy analysts say this interpretation misread the depth of Russian opposition to Nato's expansion. Russia has three reasons for fearing that the eastward expansion of Nato will change the strategic balance. The first links Nato expansion to a series of disarmament agreements involving painful cuts in Russia's conventional and nuclear forces.

The second is the increased and unwelcome Western military activity in the Black Sea, where Russia is already keenly aware of its military weakness. The third is Russia's loss of eastern Europe as an arms market, which would turn to the West.

● Two weeks after returning to work, Boris Yeltsin set off a fresh health scare this week by cancelling all his appointments for the coming days. His aides said that he had a "heavy cold" and temperature, but denied that the illness was related to the president's heart condition.

Washington Post, page 16

Generals in Pakistan get a slice of power

Suzanne Goldenberg in New Delhi and Phil Goodwin in Islamabad

PAKISTAN'S interim government gave the military a formal share of power this week, establishing a national security council with a broad mandate encompassing the economy as well as defence.

Although Pakistan's generals, who have held power for half of the 50 years since independence, have long been suspected of controlling civilian governments too, the council marks the military's first official role in democratic politics.

Even the late dictator General Mohammed Zia ul-Haq was thwarted by his opponents in an attempt to push through a similar measure in the eighties.

The 10-member council — to include the chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, army, navy and air force commanders, and the president, prime minister and other ministers — will "give mature advice to the government of the day", the information minister, Ershad Haqqani, said.

There were fears that the move *would further weaken Pakistan's* fragile democracy. No government has managed to serve a full term since independence, and civilian governments have been wary of upsetting the military since Zia's death in 1988.

In November Benazir Bhutto's government was sacked, amid allegations of human rights abuses, financial incompetence and rampant corruption. The interim government has promised to hold elections on February 3. The military is believed to have supported Ms *Bhutto's dismissal* by President Farooq Leghari, as well as the dismissals of the two previous governments.

Sartaj Aziz, a senior member of Nawaz Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League, said that if his party came to power it would probably keep the new council. "I think this measure will be viewed with concern [by those who fear] that probably it is undermining the political system," he said.

"But I feel that if the next government works within the rules of the game, then these concerns could be allayed and the body could become one of the normal state functioning bodies."



A beach vendor parks his food stall in the sea at Karachi to catch customers coming back from a swim PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID AHMED

French units fight Bangui mutineers

Raphael Kopessoua in Bangui

FRENCH TROOPS controlled strategic points in the Central African Republic's capital Bangui on Monday as residents ventured out on the streets after a weekend of bloody clashes that killed more than a dozen people.

With French troops patrolling major highways and checking vehicles after launching reprisal raids against Central African army mutineers last Sunday, taxis and buses reappeared and markets in the city reopened.

On the political front, the city awaited the return of Mali's former military leader, Amadou Toumani Toure, for a fresh attempt to defuse the impoverished nation's third army mutiny in less than a year. Officials with the follow-up committee — appointed after the mediation in December by four African heads of state — said he was expected to arrive this week.

Army mutineers called for dialogue after bloody clashes with French forces, who launched helicopter-led raids in response to the *killing of two French officers*.

French troops, in the former colony under a defence pact, intervened to keep President Ange-Felix Patasse in power during the second revolt in May.

France accused mutineers of gunning down the two unarmed officers last Saturday and said Sunday's raids, which also used tanks and armoured personnel carriers, were in self-defence.

A French defence ministry spokesman said 10 mutineers were killed and 30 were taken prisoner. Spokesmen for the mutineers put the death toll among their ranks at 21 and said 11 civilians had also been killed.

The United States said that it fully supported France in launching the reprisals against the mutineers. "We understand that the French government acted as it should have acted in its own defence and in defence of the duly-constituted government of the Central African Republic," the State Department spokesman, Nicholas Burns, said — *Reuter*

India police hunt militants after blast

INDIAN police said last week they would hunt down the Bodo tribal militants who engineered one of the most lethal acts of terror in the northeastern region, killing dozens of people in Assam with bombs on a mainline railway track, *writes Suzanne Goldenberg in New Delhi.*

From daybreak until dusk villagers and railway officials hacked through thick jungle to pull 33 bodies from the wreckage of the Delhi-bound Brahmaputra Mail, which was derailed by the explosion in the Kokhrajhar district. Some 62 people were taken to hospital, 22 in a serious condition.

L R Bishnoi, the police chief in Kokhrajhar, said the toll could have been far higher had the derailed coaches not slid into a culvert, which cushioned the impact. Earlier, officials had said 300 people were feared killed. Mr Bishnoi said most of the fatalities occurred in the single coach that was destroyed by the explosions.

No group has claimed responsibility for the bombs, which were detonated by copper-coloured trip wires from guerrilla positions 800 metres away, but suspicions has centred on the Bodo Security Force.

"It was basically the handiwork of the Bodos. Only Bodo militant organisations are active in this area," Mr Bishnoi said. He said police had identified more than 100 BSF fighters in Kokhrajhar district alone.

The Bodos have emerged as the most powerful of the 40 armed insurgent groups operating in the seven remote and sparsely populated states of northeastern India.

All accuse New Delhi of exploiting a region rich in natural resources while denying it basic human rights.

● Separatist militants struck at Kashmir's most heavily defended area last week, killing four people in a bomb explosion near the home of the chief minister in Srinagar. The bomb, planted in a three-wheel autorickshaw, blew up within 30 metres of the residence of Farooq Abdullah, who came to power three months ago in state assembly elections after seven years of direct rule from New Delhi.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
January 12 1997

Hutus face death for genocide

Christian Jennings in Kigali

A RWANDAN court sentenced two Hutus to death last week for genocide and crimes against humanity, delivering the first death penalties for the slaughter in 1994 of an estimated 800,000 people.

State-run radio said Deogratias Bizimana, a former medical assistant, and Egide Gatanazi, a former administrator, had 15 days to appeal. Both men were tried last month before three judges in the southeastern town of Kibungo on charges of organising massacres. They pleaded not guilty, but had no defence lawyers.

The two were the first to go on trial under a genocide law passed last year. About 90,000 Rwandans are crammed into jails, accused of taking part in the slaughter of members of the minority Tutsi ethnic group and Hutu moderates. Most of the killings have been blamed on Hutu troops, militiamen and mobs.

Asked whether the two men had a fair trial without defence lawyers, Gerard Gahima, Rwanda's deputy justice minister, said: "Under our law people can be tried without lawyers. If people think you can sweep the *genocide of 1 million people under* the carpet because there are no lawyers, they can think again. These crimes were committed in broad daylight. Either there were eyewitnesses or there were not. There are no complex legal issues involved. It is an issue of fact."

Under Rwandan law, executions are carried out by firing squad.

Human rights groups welcomed the start of the trials, but said they were flawed because of the lack of defence representation.

A Hutu Rwandan refugee lobby group, the Rally for the Return of Refugees and Democracy to Rwanda, dismissed the trials as "a mockery of justice". It claimed Hutu returnees being detained were being falsely accused by people who wanted their property.

The United Nations human rights office in Kigali said more than 2,000 Rwandan Hutus, some of the 460,000 refugees who returned from Tanzania last month, had been arrested as genocide suspects.

An international tribunal on the Rwandan genocide opened its first trials at its headquarters in Arusha, Tanzania, last year but cannot impose the death penalty on those found guilty.

"Some people feel public executions will serve as a lesson to those who might reconsider genocide," Mr Gahima said. — *Reuter*

Egide Gatanazi listens as a judge in Kibungo, Rwanda, sentences him to death PHOTOGRAPH: ARMANDO FRANCA

Triumph for ruling party in Singapore

Nick Cumming-Bruce in Singapore

SINGAPORE'S reigning People's Action Party emerged from a bitterly fought general election last week with all but two seats in the country's 83-member parliament.

The PAP, led by the prime minister, Goh Chok Tong, entered the campaign assured of victory because 47 seats were uncontested. The five tiny opposition parties, which had nurtured hopes of winning seven or eight seats between them, won two — half the number they held in the last parliament.

Mr Goh, leading the PAP into an election for the second time and for what he described as a referendum on his performance in office, enjoyed a rise in the PAP's share of the vote from 61 to 66 per cent. He claimed the results showed voters had "rejected Western-style liberal democracy and freedom [which puts] individual rights over that of society".

The outcome will be a severe blow to opposition candidates, who were never confident of slowing the PAP juggernaut but were encouraged by what they described as ex*ceptionally outspoken support from* voters and large, enthusiastic crowds at their rallies.

The opposition Workers' Party (WP) and Singapore People's Party each claimed one seat. Their numbers may be reinforced by up to three "nominated MPs" drawn from the best losers.

But the biggest casualty was the Singapore Democratic Party, which defended three seats and lost them all. Its chairman, Chee Soon Juan, who is under financial pressure after losing a defamation suit brought by a PAP member, succumbed to ferocious PAP attacks calling him a liar and a cheat.

Particularly sweet for Mr Goh will be the party's victory in the *multi-seat Cheng San constituency* contested by the Workers' Party candidate Tang Lian Hong, who became the focal point of vitriolic denunciations by the PAP's top team.

Mr Goh, unchallenged in his own constituency, said he was staking his reputation on a PAP victory in Cheng San and blocking entry to parliament by Mr Tang, branded by the PAP as a racist menace to the harmony between Singapore's Chinese, Malay and Indian communities.

Mr Goh voiced fears that the rise of China and the Chinese language over the next 20 years would tempt ethnic Chinese in Singapore to push for a more prominent role, upsetting the balance between communities and threatening a return to the communal violence of the 1950s. "We are not a Chinese country and must never allow Chinese chauvinists to turn us into one," he said.

The opposition parties had wanted the election campaign to focus on other issues, such as the country's rising cost of living, and had also hoped that voters would want to usher in a stronger non-PAP voice in parliament. But they had *little chance to get their message* across as the PAP successfully controlled most of the election agenda.

Its leaders issued apocalyptic warnings of the dire fate awaiting the island if the party's authority were in any way diminished. Mr Goh had warned that a WP victory in Cheng San would put Singapore on the road to becoming another Beirut, Yugoslavia, Rwanda or Sri Lanka.

The PAP also struck closer to the voters' pockets, bluntly warning that constituencies that voted for the opposition would not benefit from state spending on upgrading public housing.

Deputy PM turns republican

Christopher Zinn in Sydney

AUSTRALIA seems more likely to become a republic after an unexpected proposal last week by the National Party leader and deputy prime minister, Tim Fischer, to remove all references to the Queen *from the constitution* and transfer her functions to the chief justice.

It is the first time a senior member of the National Party, which shares federal power with the Liberals in a coalition, has supported any move towards republicanism, and the more surprising because Mr Fischer was deemed a die-hard monarchist.

Mr Fischer wants his party to back the plan only if the people vote for a republic in a plebiscite due later this year. "If after a fair dinkum debate the people of Australia opt for a republic, then this is the model worthy of consideration," he said.

His plan involves the chief justice taking over the Queen's power to appoint and dismiss the governor-general on the advice of the prime minister. Constitutional experts say his suggestion that the monarch's name be removed from the constitution would require a major rewrite of the document.

The prime minister, John Howard, favours retaining the constitutional monarchy but has promised a vote on the issue this year.

Most republicans gave Mr Fischer's plan a qualified thumbs up; most monarchists rejected it.

The chairman of the Australian Republican Movement, Malcolm Turnbull, said that while he sup*ported the move, retaining the* title governor-general would be a confusing hangover from the monarchy.

Experts said that letting a judge meddle in politics was at odds with the separation of powers entrenched in the constitution.

The leader of the Labour opposition, Kim Beazley, called on Mr Howard to press ahead with the referendum. "Once more the National Party is displaying a willingness to take a position on a potentially difficult public issue when the prime minister . . . seems reluctant to do so," he said.

● A terminally-ill woman has become the second person to die under Australia's world-first euthanasia law, using a laptop computer to deliver a fatal dose of drugs and bring her "peace at last".

Euthanasia campaigners said that 52-year-old Janet Mills, who was suffering from a rare form of skin cancer that causes the skin to disintegrate, committed suicide last week.

Clinton rewards tough EU line on Cuba

Martin Walker in Washington

PRESIDENT Bill Clinton rewarded the European Union's tougher stance on Cuba's human rights policy last week by extending for another six months the temporary waiver of controversial legislation making foreign companies liable to action in courts in the United States for trading with Cuba.

Mr Clinton's decision was announced well after the election victory in which he carried the state of Florida — with its vocal and politically influential community of Cuban exiles.

It eases an important irritant in US-European relations, but the Helms-Burton Act remains on the books. The fundamental issue of US presumption in seeking to extend the power of its courts beyond US borders awaits adjudication at the World Trade Organisation's tribunal.

The EU also complains of a separate US law designed to punish foreign companies that invest in Iran's energy industry.

Mr Clinton's decision had been widely expected, after the EU last month announced a new "common position", whereby EU members would "evaluate developments in Cuban internal and foreign policies" in the light of Cuba's observance of human rights conventions.

European diplomats in Washington said the temporary extension fell short of their hopes. They expected the EU suit at the WTO to continue while President Clinton maintained the threat of reimposing the law.

Announcing his decision from his holiday spot in the Virgin Islands, Mr Clinton said: "I would expect to continue suspending the right to file suit so long as American friends and allies continue their stepped-up efforts to promote a transition to democracy in Cuba." He was extending the waiver "to consolidate and build on the momentum we have generated for democratic change".

***Mr Clinton* signed the law last March, after Cuban fighters shot down in international waters two civilian aircraft flown by Cuban exiles based in Florida. He had initially opposed the bill, but then argued it was needed to display US outrage at Cuba's action.**

Stuart Eizenstat, a former US ambassador to the EU and deputy commerce secretary, was dispatched around Europe and the Americas to calm the equal outrage of US allies at the prospect of their business executives being excluded from the US or hauled into US courts because their companies traded with Cuba.

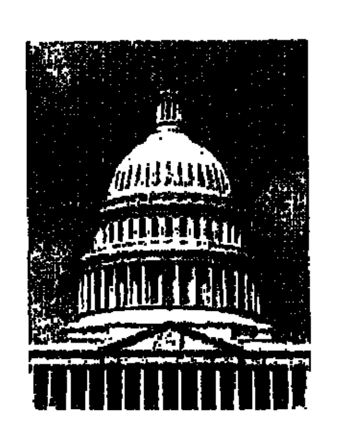
Mr Eizenstat was pelted with eggs in Mexico, saw Canada pass retaliatory legislation, and then watched the EU take the US to the new international court of the WTO. Along the way, he was deluged with formal protests from US allies.

Britain and other European allies told Washington that it was illogical to defend trade with China as a means to promote political liberalisation, while doing the reverse in Cuba.

European officials said their policies of supporting non-governmental organisations and democratic transition in Cuba had not seriously changed. What did change was the attitude of Spain, long Fidel Castro's staunchest defender in Europe, after Cuban attacks on the new conservative Spanish prime minister, José Maria Aznar, as "ignorant" after he criticised the Castro government.

Washington Post, page 18

Foreign policy goes to market



The US this week

Martin Walker

MADELEINE ALBRIGHT goes to Capitol Hill this week for the hearings that are expected to confirm her as the first woman secretary of state. Her assiduous attentions to the very conservative North Carolina Senator, Jesse Helms, chairman of the foreign relations committee, should ensure that she faces few embarrassments in this sometimes difficult process. But the sessions could also provide some important clues to the way she intends to tackle the two main foreign policy challenges: managing Russia's weakness and China's ascendancy.

From Senator Helms's staff, we know that his questioning will focus strongly on China, and on the wisdom of President Clinton's plan to hold a summit with China's Jiang Zemin before Beijing's scheduled takeover of Hong Kong on July 1. Senator Helms is a staunch supporter of Taiwan, and remains suspicious of the Chinese government. He is far from convinced of the Clinton administration's view that trade and diplomatic engagement is the way to steer a fast-growing China into the Clintonian vision of a world of free-trading democracies.

Nor is Senator Helms persuaded that in the course of that bumpy process Beijing can be encouraged to act as a co-operative and house-trained power, joining the rest of the international community in the responsible pursuit of terrorists, organised crime and money launderers, and in the discouragement of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Looking at China's record in selling missiles to Iran and Pakistan, and the free-wheeling ways of Beijing's new arms merchants, Senator Helms has a point.

Moreover, one of the serious questions for Clinton's second term is the degree to which Albright's State Department will be allowed to regain control over China policy. In the past two years, much of it was co-ordinated through the National Economic Council at the White House, where Laura Tyson gathered together the various strands of trade, economic and strategic policy towards China. Tyson has been replaced by Gene Sperling, whose interests are more domestic. There is great danger now of China policy falling apart into its various components, with the Commerce Department wooing American contracts, the US trade representative trying to police Chinese copyright infringements by threatening sanctions, the Pentagon trying to build a relationship with the Chinese high command, and the CIA leaking its latest findings of missile smuggling and so on.

All this needs a central direction, and there is no obvious candidate to provide it, beyond the driving idea of the Clinton administration that free trade is a panacea for America's future geopolitical problems as well as providing the main promise of growth for the domestic economy. In this context, it is important to note that corporate America has become not only the prime lobby that pressed the case for China's Most Favoured Nation trading status, but also the most powerful and single-minded force that is driving policy. Corporate America drives its agenda through campaign finance donations and direct lobbying of Congress, as well as rallying its employees to put pressure on their Congressmen.

In this context, the historical parallels between the Clinton and the Eisenhower administrations are becoming compelling. Just as Eisenhower reconciled the Republicans to President Roosevelt's New Deal, so Clinton is reconciling the Democrats to President Reagan's assault upon it. It was during his confirmation hearings to become Eisenhower's secretary of defence that Charles Wilson of General Motors expressed his famous phrase: "What was good for our country was good for General Motors and vice versa. The difference did not exist." In the Clinton era, what is good for America is deemed to be what is good for Boeing's exports, for Microsoft's penetration of the world's computer operating systems and for Hollywood's screenings in cinemas across the globe. And in this new export-driven corporatism, the potential of China's market is an irresistible lure.

It is interesting, therefore, that Albright has little background in Chinese matters, except for her work at the United Nations. She is by birth, ancestry, academic training and experience, in that classic Atlanticist tradition of US foreign policy professionals. There are no doubts about where she stands on the central matter of European policy. She strongly supports the enlargement of what is increasingly called "the Atlantic civil space". This means bringing the eastern European countries into the Nato alliance, where the US has the commanding say, and also into the European Union, where the US has far less leverage.

Nato and the European Union are, in the striking words of the current US ambassador to Nato, Robert Hunter, "two institutions living in the same city on separate planets. As of now, the relationship between Nato and the US is virtually non-existent". He was speaking in the week before Christmas, in an address to Washington's European Institute, which laid out with rare clarity the Clinton administration's real and grandiose agenda for Europe.

"The first grand objective, of course, is to keep America as a European power, not just for today, but for the indefinite future," Hunter stressed. "What the European Union and Nato are trying to do in central Europe is nothing less than to complete the promise of the Marshall Plan, which was thwarted by Joseph Stalin some 50 years ago, and bounded at the Iron Curtain. We finally have a chance now to take that grand effort to completion. How rare it is in history — perhaps unique — that we have a chance to take a second bite at history's apple!"



EYES ON THE PRIZE

This has been the policy of the Clinton administration even before Albright was nominated, but she brings to this goal the fervour of one who saw her native Czechoslovakia abandoned by its Western allies in 1938, and then swallowed into the Soviet bloc for more than 40 years. She will have rather less time for Russian objections to this process than many of her State Department colleagues. After her frustrating experience over Bosnia, when she became openly contemptuous of her British and French colleagues until the 1995 Nato air strikes, which led to the Dayton peace agreement, she is not inclined to be indulgent of the western European allies' foot-dragging.

THE FRENCH, British and Germans are all less enthusiastic about proceeding apace with Nato enlargement, although the admission of Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic by the alliance's 50th anniversary in 1999 is virtually a done deal. But the Baltic states — to name but those who most weigh on Clinton's conscience — are also standing nervously in line, understandably desperate for some assurance that no new dividing line will then appear across Europe, leaving them on the wrong side.

It is important to realise that the main actors in US foreign policy today, from Clinton to Albright, from the deputy secretary of state, Strobe Talbott, to the outgoing national security adviser, Tony Lake, were all as students raised in awe of America's national security strategists in the late 1940s. The then secretary of state, Dean Acheson, chose Present At The Creation as the immodest title for his memoirs. And in various speeches and talks with the crew, I detect a quiet but firm determination to think and act as grandly in the aftermath of the cold war as their predecessors did at its beginning.

Lake went to great lengths to find for the Clinton years a phrase as arresting as George Kennan's 1946 coinage of "containment" to define a strategy for dealing with the Soviet Union. Lake's solution, "enlargement", has not caught the public imagination, if only because it needs sub-clauses about expanding the democratic and civil space of free markets and free institutions.

Unlike Albright, Lake appears likely to face difficulty in persuading the Senate to confirm him in the new job to which Clinton has nominated him, that of the ultimate spymaster, director of Central Intelligence. He has been warned by some Republican senators that he faces "tough sailing" in persuading them that he is the right man to take over a CIA thoroughly demoralised by molehunts and by a great confusion over its post-cold war role. He faces some niggling questions about his failure to sell some energy stocks in 1993 when the White House counsel advised him of a possible conflict of interest (Lake blames his accountant). He will also be tackled on his role in what the Republicans like to list as the failures of Clinton's first term, in Somalia and, at least initially, in Haiti.

But his biggest problem will be to satisfy the Republicans about bringing peace to Bosnia, that success of Clinton's first term. On the flight back from Nixon's funeral in California, Clinton, Talbott and Lake agreed on what might be called turning a blind eye towards Croatia's discreet inquiry as to whether the US would approve the secret delivery of Iranian arms to Bosnia via Croatia, breaching the United Nations arms embargo on the region. The request had been made to the US ambassador in Zagreb, Peter Galbraith, who asked for instructions. The decision was made that Galbraith should say that he had no instructions, which meant that the US would turn a blind eye to the arms smuggling that helped Bosnia survive.

This policy was concealed from the CIA, from Congress, from the UN and from America's allies (although both the CIA and British intelligence swiftly learned what was afoot). Congress is jealous of its prerogatives in such matters, and the issue became even sharper last week, when it was leaked that the Iranians had consolidated their Bosnian ties by donating $500,000 to the presidential election campaign of Alija Izetbegovic. This had a familiar ring to the Congressmen, who know all about the favours that campaign donors expect in return for their cash.

"The fact that Lake was one of the authors of the duplicitous policy in Bosnia, which was very controversial and which has probably helped strengthen the hand of the Iranians, does not play well," noted Senator Richard Shelby of Alabama. A Democrat turned Republican, Shelby is the incoming chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, and will be in charge of Lake's confirmation hearings. "He will undergo rigorous examination," he said.

When he was nominated by Clinton last month, Lake offered an interesting definition of his new job: "I firmly believe that in the post-cold war world the role of the CIA is more important than ever in defending America against the threats of terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction." That may resonate well in public and with Congress, but it is not quite the way the cloak-and-dagger fraternity see their mission. Bred to the Great Game, their frustration with the new tasks of what is becoming the Small Game helps explain the spate of early retirements and resignations that is leaving the CIA an increasingly empty and demoralised shell.

Lake is an honourable man. As a rising star of the foreign service he had done well in the Saigon embassy during the Vietnam war, but resigned from a fast-track job on Henry Kissinger's national security council (NSC) staff. He objected to the 1971 invasion of Cambodia, and gave up his career on principle. From his later experience as head of policy planning in President Carter's State Department, he wrote Somoza Falling, one of the most illuminating books about the complexities of foreign policy in a Washington buffeted by lobbyists and Congressmen. His theme was policy towards Nicaragua, at a time when the national security adviser, Zbigniew Bzrezinski, was in an almost constant state of bureaucratic war with Cyrus Vance's State Department.

The great merit of Lake's tenure at the NSC over the past four years was to avoid any such repetition of these disputes, save for a couple of embarrassing rows over Haiti and Northern Ireland. The fact that after four years Clinton's foreign policy looked very much better than it did in the first two years owes a lot to him. But to run the CIA, and also to be supremo over a much larger US intelligence empire of spy satellites and electronic listening posts, will be a formidable challenge — even without the rough ride that the Senate has in store.

Feud forces leaders to woo Pol Pot defectors

Nick Cumming-Bruce in Phnom Dey

THE KILLING and terror that has dogged Cambodia for much of the past 20 years seemed to be slipping fast into history as the co-prime minister Hun Sen stood up to address the crowd assembled in the old Khmer Rouge stronghold of Phnom Dey.

Arrayed before him were 800 former Pol Pot soldiers, their frozen, suspicious stares offset by uniforms that confirmed their defection to the regime in Phnom Penh. Seated behind was Ny Korn, one of the most senior of Pol Pot's commanders to fall into government hands.

But if Hun Sen had come to Phnom Dey to bury one conflict, his presence was partly the product of a bitter new feud, this time with the other co-prime minister, Prince Norodom Ranariddh. The accusations of assassination plots that generals loyal to one leader last week levelled at those supporting the other revealed how far the leaders' rivalry has now split the army.

Khmer Rouge brutality found no place in Hun Sen's speech to "my relatives, my compatriots", in which he praised their courage in defecting. They had asked for 16 schools, he said: he would give them 16 schools. They wanted roads: army engineers would build them.

After the speeches, he was off in a convoy of pick-up trucks bouncing up dirt roads to the hospital, peering at malaria patients and pressing envelopes with a little useful cash in the hands of each. To the director went a wad of hundred dollar notes.

His relaxed style and winning largesse help explain why Hun Sen is respected even by rivals as one of Cambodia's most effective politicians. But his performance contrasted starkly with the violent rhetoric that only days earlier he fired at Prince Ranariddh and his followers in the royalist party, Funcinpec.

At a time when the government is handing out amnesty to such Khmer Rouge figures as Ieng Sary, once sentenced to death for his part in Pol Pot's genocidal terror, Funcinpec leaders are seeking an amnesty for Prince Norodom Sirivudh. The half-brother of King Sihanouk was forced into exile early last year to escape allegations of plotting to kill Hun Sen. The accusation by Hun Sen was widely seen as invention, aimed at eliminating a political competitor, and Prince Sirivudh's party now wants him back.

Prince Ranariddh has applied to the king for amnesty and Prince Sirivudh has announced his determination to return. But Hun Sen apparently will have none of it. Any aircraft carrying the prince to Cambodia would be shot down, he warned last month.

Friends and enemies judge Hun Sen's resort to threats and intimidation in Prince Sirivudh's case as a calculated preparation for the elections in 1998. Hun Sen and the Cambodian People's Party (CPP) ruled Cambodia before UN-run elections three years ago, and make no secret of their determination to emerge all-powerful from the next election.

Relations between the two co-prime ministers have already deteriorated to a point where they barely communicate. The council of ministers has met three or four times in the past nine months.

Funcinpec, casting around for political allies, is now moving towards an electoral alliance with smaller political parties and feverishly courting defecting Khmer Rouge commanders with whom the party was once allied in an anti-Vietnamese resistance coalition against the CPP.

Funcinpec's frustration and humiliation at the hands of the CPP have already boiled over into armed confrontation once this month, when royalist troops in Battambang fired B-40 rockets at troops loyal to the CPP. If confrontation erupts, the northwest may once again serve as Funcinpec's fall-back position.

"This is a very dangerous situation," a CPP insider said, adding that both sides were preparing contingency plans for a possible armed showdown.

Hun Sen has moved swiftly to try to pre-empt Funcinpec. Days before arriving in Phnom Dey, he flew to a timber-rich former Khmer Rouge base, taking businessmen with him to woo the locals. He plans to fly to other defectors' bases. Some 90 per cent of Khmer Rouge defectors now support him, he claims.

If that figure seems absurdly high, it is partly because Hun Sen also attracts strong misgivings in his own party. Many do not appreciate his aggressive style and some have sought to mend relations with Funcinpec.

Hun Sen, protected by tanks and a praetorian guard of 500 troops, appears to set his own targets with little regard to his critics. He has now toned down his rhetoric against Prince Sirivudh, offering to buy him a first-class ticket and to greet him at the airport.

But few people, even in his own party, seem convinced this is any more than a pause before the next storm.

"It's not yet bloody, it's messy," a Western analyst in Phnom Penh said. "But no one knows what will happen. It could become a bloody mess."

The first tourists — including former prisoners — walking in Robben Island prison grounds last week

Tourists follow in Mandela's footsteps

Joanna Coles in Cape Town

THE THEME music to Good Morning Vietnam, was blasting from the row of pizzerias as the good tug Proteus, on its maiden voyage, manoeuvred away from Cape Town's waterfront shopping complex.

"Right," shouted the captain, "we'll be travelling at a rate of 20 knots, so hold on to your babies." The swell in Table Bay was compensated only by the spellbinding view behind us of Table Mountain flanked by the Lion's Head and Devil's Peak.

It takes 40 minutes by boat from Cape Town to Robben Island, and this was the first boat to take ordinary South Africans on a tour of the island where their president spent a third of his life in prison.

"I wanted to come and understand it first hand, for myself," said Elizabeth Matheka, with her husband, a legal consultant from Johannesburg.

In the ultimate gesture of reconciliation, our guides turned out to be former prisoners and ex-prison officers, indistinguishable in their uniform of guinea fowl-patterned shirts.

As the boat docked they herded us on two old charabancs and the trip took on the nature of a surreal school outing, with passengers hurling questions.

"Was it true that sharks were fed from the island to prevent prisoners from swimming?" demanded a small Indian boy. "No," said Neil Fourie, a former "correctional officer". "But can you still see sharks?" the boy persisted.

"What about the leper colony?" asked Lynda Robinson. "The lepers were here from 1845 to 1935," said Mr Fourie, pointing to a tidal pool where the lepers had bathed, hoping the salt water would ease their terrible disease.

Past the wreck of a yacht called Song of Love, past a Taiwanese fishing vessel and the colony of 10,000 penguins, the bus circled the island, juddering to an abrupt halt in another quarry, this time of bright white stone.

"This is where President Mandela worked," Mr Fourie said, and the bus broke into spontaneous wolf whistles. "Take off your sunglasses and imagine working in this glare five days a week. The dust blocked the tear ducts — no wonder our president has trouble with his eyes."

"Shame," called out Mrs Matheka, to more whooping. "Were the prisoners shackled?" inquired the Indian boy. Lionel Davids, a former political prisoner, shook his head.

It was here in the white glare that the prisoners would swap stories and information from their correspondence courses, educating each other in the process.

The highlight of the trip is the prison itself, which still bears its notorious motto, "We Serve With Pride", over the entrance.

"Aren't you scared he'll lock you up?" the Indian boy asked Mr Davids as he and Mr Fourie counted us through the prison door. "But I'm used to staying here," grinned Mr Davids, adding that the political prisoners were never actually allowed a view of Cape Town.

"They didn't want us to orientate ourselves," retorted Lizo, another ex-prisoner, sharply, as he led us down the corridor to Nelson Mandela's old cell.

"Was he treated any differently to the others?" asked Ms Robinson, eyeing the grim bed, grey blanket and six bars on the window of the two-by-three-metre cell.

"Fear," said Mr Davids slowly, shepherding us back to the bus. "Fear . . . The prison officers were all scared of him, you know."

Dalai Lama's plea ignored as militants turn violent

John Gittings

THE explosion that took the traditional sanctum of Buddhist non-violence into the age of bombs and terrorism on Christmas Day confirms the worst fears of Tibet's exiled Dalai Lama.

He has warned Beijing repeatedly in recent months that the Tibetan people, faced with Chinese intransigence, will adopt more violent methods of protest — which he personally condemns.

The bomb in the Tibetan capital, Lhasa, was the biggest in a series of incidents which began without publicity over a year ago, and the first to be acknowledged by Chinese officials, who now admit that Beijing has a terrorist problem.

Last week the Dalai Lama, through a spokesman, repeated his warning that he will "abdicate the leadership of the Tibetan people" if the movement renounces non-violence. The implication is that he will give up trying to negotiate with Beijing — which has always rebuffed his overtures — and confine himself to religious teaching.

A statement from his Indian headquarters at Dharamsala also warned that the latest incident will be used by Beijing to "increase political repression in Tibet".

The bomb exploded early in the morning outside the offices of the Lhasa metropolitan district office, on the main shopping street, injuring five people. Witnesses said the security services were slow to mount a co-ordinated response. Debris was left uncleared and checkpoints out of town were not established until the following day.

An official broadcast on December 27 compared the bombing to terrorist incidents elsewhere in the world. This is the first time that China has admitted that it has a terrorist problem. The Chinese authorities have responded to the bomb by launching a manhunt across Tibet, with security checks at airports and on returned exiles, and are offering a reward of $132,000 for the capture of the bombers.

New evidence has emerged of a shift towards violence as Tibetan militants decide that peaceful protest is futile. China now identifies political bombing as a main target in applying its nationwide anti-crime campaign to Tibet. Tibet's Chinese-appointed governor has described "cases involving explosions committed by [Tibetan] separatists" as the most important part of the campaign.

Three smaller explosions were reported in 1996, following at least four in 1995, according to the London-based Tibet Information Network. One bomb in Sog county was planted last January by a Tibetan monk in protest at Beijing's imposed choice of a new Panchen Lama (the second-ranking figure in the Tibetan hierarchy).

The Dalai Lama has made a series of proposals to Beijing for negotiations that would seek genuine autonomy for Tibet, while ruling out independence. Last October he stated, in the most explicit terms so far, his willingness to negotiate "on an agenda that does not call for the separation and independence of Tibet". His moderate line, first aired in 1988, has aroused mistrust among militant Tibetans, while failing to entice the Chinese. Ironically, it has helped to drive some activists to adopt violent methods.

Recent Chinese policies have only deepened the Tibetan sense of hopelessness. New restrictions on religious activity in 1996 included a ban on photographs of the Dalai Lama and the dispatch of "work groups" to investigate political loyalty in the monasteries.

Tibet ranks with Hong Kong and Taiwan as one of the most neuralgic points in Chinese policy, where an attempt to pursue a moderate attitude may mean political suicide for officials in Lhasa or Beijing. But China's failure to explore the possibilities set out by the Dalai Lama for constructive negotiations towards real autonomy, while remaining under Chinese sovereignty, is a huge missed opportunity. Future leaders may recognise it as such if the tradition of non-violence is renounced in Tibet.

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The Week in Britain James Lewis

Tories jockey for top job in case Major takes a fall

THE NEW YEAR was the signal for all the main political parties to kick off their general election campaigns in earnest. Some senior Tories, however, are already looking beyond that poll to the time when, in opposition, they will be looking for a new leader to replace John Major, who would be expected to stand down if he were to lead his party to defeat.

There could be no other reason to explain an astonishing about-face by the Health Secretary, Stephen Dorrell, who urged the Prime Minister to undertake a fundamental rethink of Britain's relationship with Brussels. He said that the structures within the European Union needed to be overhauled, and that the trend towards increasing regulation in Europe had to be halted to arrest its drift towards a federal superstate.

Such talk might well be expected of hardline Cabinet Eurosceptics such as Michael Howard or Michael Portillo. But the mild-mannered Mr Dorrell was usually associated with the Cabinet's pro-Europe wing, and his words were seen as a breach of the truce on Europe that party realists deem essential if Mr Major is to have any chance of presenting a united party to the electorate.

The bookmakers, at least, say the front-runner for the leadership is still the pro-European Deputy Prime Minister, Michael Heseltine, at 9-2. But close behind, at 5-1, are the arch-sceptic Mr Portillo and the heavyweight pro-European, Chancellor Kenneth Clarke. Mr Dorrell previously shared third place, at 6-1, with Mr Howard.

Chris Patten, the Governor of Hong Kong and one-time front-runner, has distanced himself from the contest by raising doubts about his return to Westminster after nearly five years away from British politics.

Mr Major believes a pragmatic, wait-and-see attitude towards Europe and a single currency is the best way to woo the voters and hold together his embattled Cabinet team. If he gets it wrong, the assumption is that his increasingly Europhobe MPs will revolt and elect the most charismatic nationalist they can find. Someone like Mr Dorrell, perhaps.

THE outcome of the election may well be influenced by sensitive issues that politicians would prefer to keep quiet about.

Abortion is just such a topic, and MPs in at least 50 constituencies are to be challenged by candidates of the Pro-Life Alliance, a well-organised anti-abortion movement.

Besides receiving a pledge of £25,000 from Mohamed Al Fayed, the chairman of Harrods, to cover the £500 deposits for 50 candidates, the alliance was given a powerful boost by the Archbishop of Westminster, Cardinal Basil Hume, who described abortion as "a great evil in our society".

The cardinal, head of the Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales, insisted that he was not telling people how to vote, but hoped they would pay attention to his guiding principle "that all life is sacred".

Most politicians see abortion as a matter of individual conscience. Labour's leader, Tony Blair, for example, is personally opposed to abortion but does not believe it should be illegal.

Single-issue campaigners rarely pick up many votes, but the activities of the alliance candidates, coupled with those of the Referendum Party, could tilt the balance in some marginal seats.

COLIN SEYMOUR, Britain's most successful amateur litigant, scored a landmark court victory that could protect 40,000 miles of hedgerow for ever. The outcome of his county court action to save 56 yards of hawthorn hedge near his home in Flamborough, East Yorkshire, means that more than 4,000 Enclosure Acts, passed 200 years ago, may still have the force of law.

The parish council wanted to remove the hedge to make way for a bowling green. Mr Seymour, aged 63, a former teacher and successful veteran of 80 public-rights cases, argued that the hedge was protected by the 1765 Flamborough Enclosure Act.

Ordering the council to look after its "undistinguished, badly maintained, straggly and unkempt" hedge for ever, Judge Cracknell said that each Enclosure Act had to be judged on its merits, adding that "English law knows nothing of an act being repealed by reason of age or disuse".

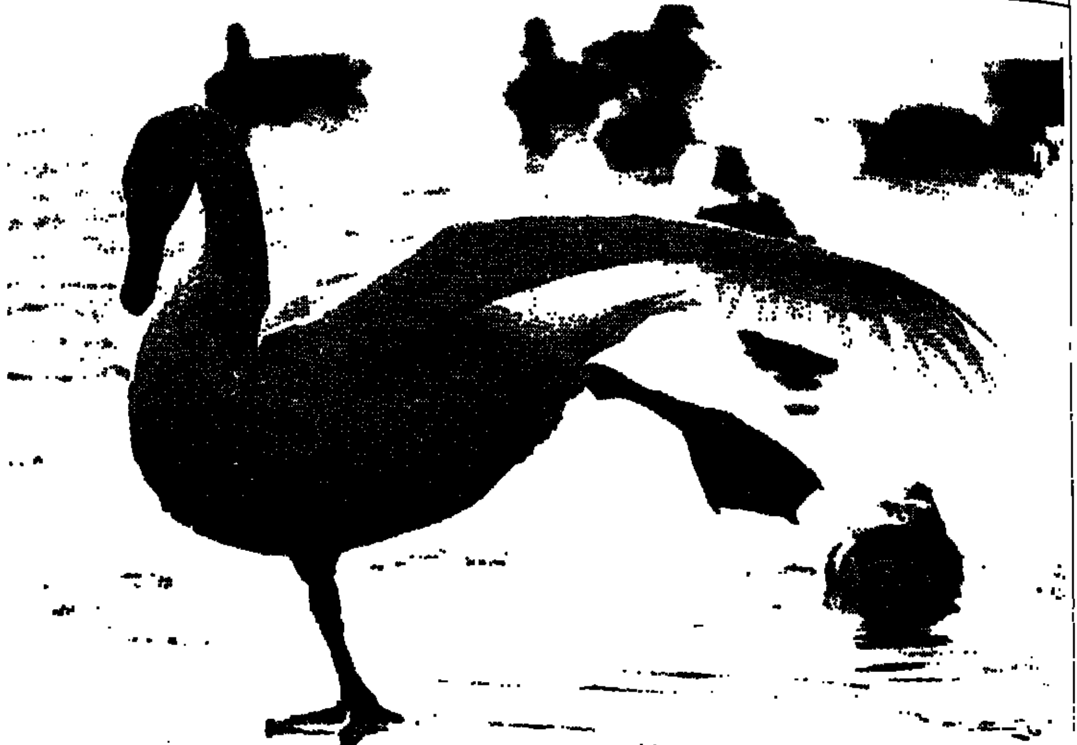
ALTHOUGH millions of pounds have been spent on improving basic skills, the Education Secretary, Gillian Shephard, conceded that there were still too many job applicants who could not read satisfactorily, and that too many young people left schools, and even universities, poorly equipped in numeracy and literacy.

Mrs Shephard promised proposals over the next few weeks to co-ordinate the literacy programmes of schools and other agencies. She is also expected to set up refresher courses for young people who leave school with borderline reading skills.

No less worrying, perhaps, is that the Government has had to set up classes to teach its senior civil servants how to write plain English. A specially-commissioned report criticised officials' baffling use of jargon in setting out course requirements for national vocational qualifications (NVQs). Instead of correcting errors, candidates are instructed to "undertake rectifying action" which is, presumably, what the plain English classes will aim to do.

IN SPITE OF a £1.2 million advertising campaign, the number of motorists caught drinking and driving over the Christmas and New Year holiday period rose by 18 per cent (to 5,209 in England and Wales) compared with the previous year.

This increase, after three years of declining figures, prompted calls for a lowering of the alcohol limit for drivers from 80mg to 50mg per 100ml of blood. Police chiefs also demanded "unfettered" powers to stop and test drivers.



A mute swan stretches on a frozen part of the River Thames in Buckinghamshire PHOTO: DAVID CHESKIN

Death toll mounts from freezing weather

Alison Daniels

FREEZING temperatures and attempts to rescue dogs claimed the lives of five people last weekend, bringing the winter accident death toll to 16 by Tuesday, after one of the coldest winter spells in decades.

In Dorset the body of Christine Taube, aged 47, was found by a neighbour in bushes near her home in Motcombe, near Shaftesbury. Last Saturday evening Mrs Taube was seen getting out of a taxi and giving chase to her dog, which had dashed off. Witnesses said she was wearing only light clothing, and it is thought that she died of hypothermia after a fall.

In Leicester, two children saw their stepfather plunge through ice into the River Soar after trying to rescue the family's dog last Saturday. Tony Page, aged 40, was dragged from the water by firefighters after the children, aged five and nine, stopped a motorist for help. He was taken to Leicester Royal Infirmary but did not regain consciousness.

Meanwhile the Government announced it was considering changing the method used to trigger cold weather payments.

Andrew Mitchell, junior social security minister, said a study to assess the impact of wind chill on home heating was being considered. He was responding to opposition attacks on the system, under which payments are triggered if temperatures fall to zero for seven consecutive days or are forecast to do so.

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Nationalist alliance cracks

David Sharrock

THE political alliance that delivered the IRA's 1994 ceasefire appeared to be crumbling this week after Sinn Fein president, Gerry Adams, reacted angrily to the SDLP leader John Hume's terms for a pact in the general election.

Mr Hume, leader of Northern Ireland's largest nationalist party, which has always strongly opposed IRA violence, challenged Mr Adams to dump a central tenet of Irish republicanism and end Sinn Fein's policy of not taking seats in the British parliament.

Mr Adams rejected the overture and declared that the general election campaign between them was now under way. The exchange is probably the most significant development within the nationalist camp in the peace process since the IRA ceasefire collapsed.

It appears to mark a victory for the large section of the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) that has grown increasingly uncomfortable with Mr Hume's relationship with Mr Adams. In what SDLP sources pointed up as a significant policy statement, Mr Hume, writing in the Irish Sunday Independent, said that for the two parties to join forces and redress the imbalance in Unionist representation at Westminster there had to be a "complete end to violence" by the IRA.

More important, he said that Sinn Fein must change its refusal to take the seats that it might win under an agreed candidate system with the SDLP in mainly nationalist constituencies.

In his toughest critique of Sinn Fein since before the Northern Ireland peace process began in 1993, Mr Hume asked: "What exactly is the motivation of those who insist in fighting for seats in a parliament they do not recognise — seats they would refuse to take if they won them?

"If they cannot jettison the policy of parliamentary abstention, is not the real logic of that position that they should abstain totally from an election to a parliament they do not recognise and in which they would not sit if elected?"

Mr Adams later accused Mr Hume of rejecting an electoral pact between their parties. "Most nationalists will be disappointed that the SDLP leadership has ruled out involvement in any realistic strategy to reverse the anomaly of Unionists misrepresenting nationalist constituencies.

"Sinn Fein has always been prepared to set aside party political advantage where this serves the wider cause of justice and peace, but to suggest that we should stand aside for the SDLP is preposterous."

Mr Adams added: "The refusal of Sinn Fein representatives to take an oath of allegiance to the English queen has not prevented us from representing our electorate."

At last May's Forum elections, Sinn Fein scored its highest ever poll, 15.7 per cent, further raising SDLP fears that for the first time the IRA's political wing was within striking distance of overtaking it and becoming the principal voice of Northern Ireland's nationalists

Earlier, during an Irish radio interview, Mr Hume refused to confirm that he will stand again in his Foyle seat. It is known that Mr Hume's wife, Pat, would like him to reduce his work commitments.

He said: "I am of course heavily burdened with the work that I have in terms of the European parliament, the British parliament, the leadership of my party and, of course, the local work one has to do in politics."

● Sir Patrick Mayhew, the Northern Ireland Secretary, last week called the IRA "criminal gangsters" for putting the lives of 400 wedding guests at risk when they abandoned a 1,000lb bomb at Belfast Castle on New Year's Eve.

He said the bomb warning from the IRA was a message that showed they had never turned away from the twin policies of terrorism and temptation.

"These people who are criminal gangsters believe there should be a continuance in 1997 of what we had in 1996 . . . violence in order to get us to give them what they want. Well, they're not going to get it," he said.

The Ulster Unionist leader, David Trimble, said it underlined the "complete fatuity" of suggestions there was about to be another ceasefire.

On Monday the IRA admitted it carried out a rocket attack on the High Court in Belfast, which injured a police officer.

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In Brief

LAWYERS for the two British nurses accused of killing a colleague in Saudi Arabia issued a statement denying that one had a lesbian relationship with the victim, and retracting confessions made when they were arrested.

MPS should face up to seven years in prison if they are convicted of accepting bribes in connection with their parliamentary duties, a Home Office consultation document says.

GILLIAN SHEPHARD, the Education and Employment Secretary, claimed Labour's plans to scrap national league tables of primary school performance showed their commitment to higher educational standards was a "sham".

CONSUMER borrowing has soared to its highest level in a decade, shortening the odds on a rise in interest rates ahead of the general election.

THE sale of Porterbrook, a train leasing company that was widely criticised last year after it netted its directors £70 million, is being investigated by the National Audit Office.

JOB prospects for graduates are better than at any time since 1990 and will further improve this year, according to the Association of Graduate Recruiters.

DAVID JENNINGS, the man who threatened to "do a Dunblane" in protest at the treatment of his children in care in Greenwich council, London, was being guarded at a police safe house after being released from prison.

GOVERNMENT plans to remove the option of early retirement for thousands of teachers will be challenged this week in the biggest protest by the profession since the testing boycott against the former education secretary, John Patten.

FIFTY-EIGHT per cent of those questioned in a MORI poll on the future of the royals believed that Britain would be a republic in 100 years' time, with 48 per cent saying the royal family will be gone within 50 years.

THE WOOLWICH announced that about 2.5 million savers and borrowers will receive free shares worth on average £1,233 when it floats on the stock market in July, with an estimated capital value of £3 billion.

A FIFTEENTH person is suspected of dying from the new form of Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease linked to infected beef, the Department of Health revealed, although it would not confirm that the "probable" victim was Victoria Lowther, aged 19, from Cumbria, who died in November.

Major savages planned Lib-Lab deal

Rebecca Smithers

JOHN MAJOR this week denounced plans by Labour and the Liberal Democrats for a constitutional shake-up after a Tory election defeat as "profoundly dangerous" for the country, as he put the defence of the constitution firmly at the heart of his campaign.

The Prime Minister's attack came as it emerged that the two main opposition parties had made considerable progress towards a deal which would involve them joining forces to push the measures on to the Statute Book in the next Parliament.

The two sides hope to finalise a joint statement at the end of next month setting out agreement on four key areas: the introduction of a Bill of Rights, wide-ranging reform of the House of Lords, a Freedom of Information Act and reforms of outdated procedures in the Commons.

But both parties moved swiftly to stress that no final deal had yet been struck, with Paddy Ashdown, the Liberal Democrat leader, making it clear that he would accept nothing short of a full package of changes — including reform of the voting system for MPs, which discriminates against the smaller parties.

Although Labour insisted no discussion has even taken place on scrapping the first-past-the-post system and replacing it with some form of proportional representation, Mr Major quickly accused the two parties of seeking "cosy agreements", and planning to "gerrymander the constitution".

He warned that such a system would produce minority governments, "[and] the inability to take really difficult decisions, and perhaps above all the removal of choice from the electorate".

On Scottish devolution he warned: "If you go down the route of a Scottish tax-raising parliament, you are likely to light the fuse towards an independent Scotland and the break-up of the United Kingdom."

Labour's deputy leader, John Prescott, said Mr Major's remarks showed he was "rattled" by the prospect of a deal between Labour and the Liberal Democrats on constitutional reform.

The wide-ranging programme of constitutional reform between the two parties has been discussed by a cross-party committee headed by the shadow foreign secretary, Robin Cook, and the Liberal Democrat president, Robert Maclennan.

Mr Major made his attack at the start of a week that will see the general election campaign move up a notch, with the launch of a poster blitz warning that the Tories' achievements would "all end in tears" if they were replaced by Labour.

But allegations by the News of the World that Jerry Hayes, the MP for Harlow in Essex and a married father of two, had had a homosexual relationship with an underage Tory researcher, threatened to overshadow the campaign after Mr Major had pledged to put the family high on his agenda.

Conservative Central Office pointedly refused to support Mr Hayes, insisting that his fate lay in the hands of his local constituency association.

Last Sunday, Mr Hayes said: "I emphatically deny the story in the News of the World, which is without substance or foundation."

Then on Monday Tory backbencher Hugh Dykes refused to back down from his commitment to discuss constitutional reform with Labour and the Liberal Democrats — and threatened to escalate his dispute with the Government.

After the publication of letters between Mr Dykes and Jack Straw, the shadow home secretary, the MP for Harrow East signalled that he could follow his north London neighbour, Sir John Gorst, in refusing to abide by the Tory whip if his local casualty ward is not kept open.

Mr Dykes is seeking to win assurances that a 24-hour fully staffed unit will remain at Edgware hospital after the accident unit is merged with Barnet.



On the offensive . . . The Tories' latest poster blitz

Europe keeps close eye on election

Ian Traynor in Bonn

THE German government last week described the forthcoming British general election as "a fateful decision for Europe" and demanded that whichever party won made up its mind about British policy towards the European Union.

The unusual and controversial statement, seen by leaders of Britain's three main parties as unwelcome meddling in the election campaign, was contained in the new year message of the foreign minister, Klaus Kinkel, which put the election top of the list of German foreign policy priorities in 1997.

Although the statement was careful to avoid taking sides in the election fight, it was construed as tacit backing for Tony Blair and the Labour party, since Bonn is desperate to see a less Euro-obstructionist team in power.

Mr Kinkel's perceived intervention sparked howls of outrage from Tory Eurosceptics, threatening a fresh round of internecine Tory warfare over the EU.

But Brian Mawhinney, the Tory party chairman, said Mr Kinkel's comments proved that Bonn wanted to retain "an experienced team" negotiating for Britain and not an untested Blair cabinet.

Robin Cook, the shadow foreign secretary, said Mr Kinkel would be better advised to debate the single European currency with his own reluctant public rather than advising Britons how to vote.

Mr Cook said: "We would judge each [integration] proposal on its merits and that is certainly an advance on the present Conservative government, which judges anything that comes out of Europe in negative terms simply because it came from Europe in the first place."

Mr Kinkel's statement echoed German exasperation with British blocking tactics in the EU after a year in which Britain's relations with the Continent sank to arguably their lowest ebb in decades. They came at the end of a year in which Anglo-German relations were soured by the beef dispute, a row over the disposal of the Brent Spar oil platform in the North Sea, and fundamental differences in trying to draft a new EU constitution.

On Tuesday John Major flew to The Hague for urgent talks on how to prevent the issue of Europe spiralling out of the control of Britain's party leaders during the election campaign.

At the talks, the Prime Minister will be offered a trade-off by Holland's social democrat prime minister, Wim Kok, whose country holds the presidency of the European Union's council of ministers.

Mr Kok wants to assure Mr Major that neither he nor any other EU leaders intend to become personally involved in the election campaign debate about Europe in Britain — a bid to prevent any domestic backlash over suspected "meddling" such as greeted Mr Kinkel's remarks.

The Dutch are also ready to delay any decision on contentious EU issues — such as greater majority voting and the right of some countries to integrate faster than others — until the election is out of the way.

Prison sieges end peacefully

Erlend Clouston

A SIEGE inside Dublin's Mountjoy Jail ended late on Monday with the release of four prison officers who had been held captive for more than 48 hours.

The end came as authorities in Scotland pondered the lessons from a 14-hour stand-off at Glenochil prison, near Alloa. The Scottish Prison Service now seems certain to review its dispensing procedures after a nurse was held through the night before being released on Monday morning.

In Dublin, the officers were taken hostage in a protest over conditions. Six inmates armed themselves with iron bars, table legs and a syringe filled with blood after an exercise session in the prison's segregation unit.

None of the prison staff was thought to have been injured during their ordeal, but all were said to be badly shaken by the experience. The first was set free shortly before 11pm; the others followed 30 minutes later.

Welcoming the development, the Irish justice minister, Nora Owen, said it was a great relief to the officers and their families.

Mountjoy has long been plagued with problems of overcrowding. Built for 450 inmates, it was home to 700 prisoners before Christmas. The prison visiting committee recently warned of "certain disaster" if the situation continued.

In Scotland, Karen Kinnear, aged 32, emerged shaken but unharmed from her overnight ordeal in the 8ft by 6ft cell. It is understood that James Holland and at least one other inmate of Glenochil prison were involved.

Ms Kinnear had been held with a prison officer as they distributed medicine to the jail's C block at about 4.30pm last Sunday. The officer, William Irvine, was released five hours later, also uninjured.

She is one of six nurses, male and female, employed at the 430-inmate facility. The motivation for the incident remains unclear. There was also confusion over the number of prisoners involved.

'Third ecstasy victim' dies

Stuart Millar

A SENIOR police officer last week launched a scathing attack on drug dealers as it emerged that a third youth may have died after taking ecstasy at a New Year's Eve party.

Detective Chief Superintendent Phil Jones, head of South Wales police CID, said the dealers were "totally unscrupulous and uncaring about whether their activities led to someone's death".

His comments came as police revealed the death of Robert Hitchens, aged 16, from Upminster, Essex, who is believed to have taken ecstasy before collapsing during a party in west London. He died on New Year's Day.

His death is the third in recent days thought to have been connected with drugs. Nicola Edwards, aged 24, from Middlesbrough, died after being detained by Strathclyde police on her way to a rave in Edinburgh. Police declined to comment on reports that she may have taken drugs.

Bilal Hussein Bhayat, aged 18, from Birmingham, is thought to have taken ecstasy before he collapsed and died during a rave party at Cardiff International Arena.

Meanwhile a south London club linked with two drug-related deaths lost its court bid to overturn a decision by Wandsworth council to refuse its licence.

Andreas Bouzis died at Club UK in January 1996 after taking ecstasy, and Kevin Jones collapsed in March 1994 after taking ecstasy and LSD before arriving at the club. Undercover police officers said they witnessed drug deals being carried out under the noses of club security staff, and on October 14, 1995, five dealers were arrested and £12,000 worth of drugs were seized.

Honour for McCartney

THE composer Sir Andrew Lloyd Webber became a lord last week and Paul McCartney, his cheerier rival in Britain's flourishing musical export market, became Sir Paul as part of a 1,035-name New Year Honours List sprinkled with show business glitter, *writes Michael White.*

The 54-year-old former Beatle said: "It's a fantastic honour, and I'm gratefully receiving it on behalf of the people of Liverpool and the other Beatles, without whom it wouldn't have been possible."

Drama was recognised with knighthoods for Alan Ayckbourn, the dramatist, and Richard Eyre, artistic director of the National Theatre. Ned Sherrin, the theatrical polymath, gets a CBE, as does Frederick Forsyth, the thriller writer.

At the lower end of what is still a class-conscious event, a traffic warden from Glasgow, Evelyn Greechan, gets an MBE, despite having given a parking ticket to her chief constable.

A third of the recipients are women and there are four new dames, including Barbara Mills, the director of public prosecutions. Ann Chant, chief of the embattled Child Support Agency, becomes a Companion of the Bath.



Maybe I'm amazed . . . the former Beatle becomes Sir Paul McCartney in the New Year Honours List PHOTOGRAPH: JIM BENNETT

Fred West film deal spurs law review

Stuart Millar

THE Government is to review the law governing the duties of the Official Solicitor, amid outrage over a decision to grant a production company access to archive material relating to the death of Fred West and events at his home in Cromwell Street, Gloucester.

The Official Solicitor, Peter Harris, entered into an option agreement with the London-based Portman Entertainment Group that gives the company non-documentary film, television, video and ancillary rights to material from the West estate.

Doubts were raised that Portman would make the film after a company director was reported to have dismissed it as the pet project of a former chief executive. But the episode led to concern about the precise role of Mr Harris who, as Official Solicitor, has a duty to "responsibly" maximise the financial returns from the West estate for the Wests' five children.

His duties principally include the prevention of a possible denial of justice by looking after the interests of children, the mentally ill and others who cannot put their own case forward.

Since Peter Harris, a former Royal Navy lieutenant-commander, took over the position on August 1, 1993, he has been involved in a number of high-profile cases dealing with some of the most controversial and difficult legal and moral issues.

He provoked fury from anti-abortionists last year when he refused to intervene to prevent the destruction of thousands of frozen human embryos after ruling that a child acquired legal rights only if it is born alive.

He also courted controversy when his intervention helped prevent Sarah Keays, the former mistress of a former Tory minister, Lord Parkinson, from allowing a television film to be made about the progress of her 13-year-old handicapped daughter, Flora, under a revolutionary treatment.

The film could not be made without High Court consent because of injunctions obtained banning publicity by Lord Parkinson, Flora's father, and Mr Harris.

In another case, Mr Harris is accusing the Government of violating the human rights of five abused and neglected children by denying them a legal remedy for delays in taking them into care. The case, filed with the European Commission of Human Rights in Strasbourg, could end in a defeat and a six-figure bill for the Government at the human rights court.

The claim, on behalf of five brothers and sisters from Bedfordshire, is being defended by the Foreign Office and the Department of Health. If the claim succeeds, it could open the way for the younger children of Frederick West and his wife, Rosemary, who are now in care, to sue Gloucestershire county council for failing to remove them earlier.

Straw lays into hereditary peers

Michael White

JOHN MAJOR'S vision of the classless society is underpinned by a hard core of Eton-and-Oxbridge hereditary peers whose crucial votes in the House of Lords stem from ancestors who bribed, stole, slept and betrayed their way into royal favour, Labour's Jack Straw declared last week.

In a fresh assault upon the hereditary aristocracy, which could — in theory — be abolished by next New Year's Day, the shadow home secretary accused backwoods peers, who rarely attend the upper house, of helping to save the Government from defeat in 66 of the 96 Lords divisions that it won in 1995/96. Ten votes were lost.

But in addition to detailing occasions when the votes of some 320 hereditary peers who take the Tory whip made the vital difference, Mr Straw also got personal. Stung by the recent claim by Lord Cranborne, Leader of the Lords, that amateur peers are increasingly more representative of the "common man" than professional politicians, he revealed that 228 of the 420 known Tory peers (some do not take the whip) went to Eton, and some 163 went to Oxford or Cambridge. Only three are women.

The latest assault comes as hereditary peers brace themselves for a Labour election victory, and, sooner or later, a short bill to end their voting rights. A six-point defence plan was offered by the rightwing columnist Simon Heffer, including extra hereditary peers in the Cabinet, and the demand that a Blair government submit its limited Lords reform package to a referendum.

Mr Straw singled out a clutch of peers with ancestral circumstances worthy of tabloid investigation. First to be arraigned were the Hamilton ancestors of the 5th Duke of Abercorn (who voted three times last year), accused of "gaining their first Scottish peerage after Sir James Hamilton joined, then betrayed, the Douglas revolt of 1455" against the Crown. As for the Duke of Buccleuch, who voted once in 1995/96 (for the Government), the wealth of Britain's largest private landowner stems from 16th century border raids against the English.

Behind this and other CVs produced by Mr Straw is a determination to show that backwoodsmen are "not just political satire", but helped to save Mrs Thatcher's poll tax bill and other reactionary legislation.

It is a hypersensitive charge for Lord Cranborne's supporters, who claim the peers routinely amend bad legislation without favour to either side. Yet the widely condemned abolition of social security benefits for asylum seekers was carried on July 22 by 182 votes to 168 only because of the votes of hereditary peers.

Fraud hot line 'saves £23m'

Alison Daniels

THE controversial benefit fraud hotline has received 120,000 calls and saved an estimated £23 million, according to figures published last week.

The Benefits Agency scheme, launched amid a fanfare of publicity in August, has apparently struck a chord with the public, although the number of calls has fallen from an initial 10,000 a week to fewer than 2,000.

Oliver Heald, junior social security minister, warned that the net was tightening on "cheats". He predicted that further government initiatives would help to save a total of £1.8 billion in the financial year ending March 31 and £7 billion by the end of the decade. "Every pound wasted in benefits fraud is a pound not available to those in genuine need."

According to the Department of Social Security, benefit fraud totals £3 billion annually, with income support fraud accounting for about £1.4 billion.

The latest figures from the anti-fraud hotline's headquarters in Preston may have pleased ministers, but anti-poverty campaigners and civil liberty groups are sceptical.

They describe the projected savings as speculative and are concerned at the impact on honest claimants of false allegations and unjustified investigations.

Falklands status safe

David Fairhall

THE prediction by the Argentine president, Carlos Menem, that his country will gain at least shared sovereignty over the Falkland Islands by the end of the century was rejected last week by the Defence Secretary, Michael Portillo.

Speaking in the Falklands capital, Port Stanley, Mr Portillo said Britain's commitment to defend the South Atlantic islands was subject to "no caveat, exception or time limit".

But he emphasised that provided the issue of sovereignty can be set aside, Britain is keen to revive commercial links with Argentina and other South American countries. Most had now embraced democracy and free-market economics, he pointed out, making them attractive for European investment.

President Menem's suggestion of shared sovereignty was made at a press conference in his native province of La Rioja, and reported within Argentina as a conciliatory shift in policy, rather than as a provocation.

"I still hope that in the year 2000 we'll see the Argentine flag flying in the islands, whether by itself or alongside other flags," he said.

The chief executive of the Falklands government, Andrew Gurr, dismissed the suggestion as part of the continuing pressure exerted on the islanders. He said neither the British government nor its Labour opposition had shown any sign of endorsing such an idea.

Elderly pay for sharp rise of young in care

David Brindle

A SHARP rise in the number of children being taken into care is forcing local authorities to cut services for elderly people to balance the books.

Social services directors say they have no choice but to take money from budgets for adults, mainly the elderly, to top up those for statutory provision for children.

Directors think the growth in numbers of children entering care has been triggered by an increase in those expelled from school. Many excluded pupils are loitering on the streets, turning to petty crime and falling out with their families.

Bob Lewis, president of the Association of Directors of Social Services, said: "I am not blaming schools, but it is affecting the services we provide. The issue needs to be addressed with a debate about school exclusions nationally."

Organisations representing the elderly are also calling for government action, to tackle the erosion of community services for adults.

Tessa Harding, head of planning and development at Help the Aged, said: "We know already that a lot of people who would have got help three years ago are not eligible now. If you then say you are cutting budgets on top of that, it is very worrying indeed. It has to stop."

Help the Aged has surveyed the extent to which local authorities are taking money from adult services. It has found that Oxfordshire plans to switch almost £1.1 million, Kent is looking for up to £1 million, Essex has transferred £1.3 million and Powys £110,000.

Mr Lewis confirmed the trend was widespread. In his own authority, Stockport, the number of children being taken into care was up 10-15 per cent on last year.

This represented extra costs of £1.5 million on Stockport's £60 million social services budget, and the authority required that any such overspending be met within the department.

There were 49,000 children being looked after by English authorities at the end of March 1995, little different from the previous 12 months, but the total this year is expected to show a sharp rise.

Almost 13,500 children were permanently excluded from school in England in 1995/96, an 8 per cent increase on the previous year. In 1991/92, the figure was less than 4,000.

Tunnel vision . . . travellers face daily delays, overcrowding and cancellations PHOTOGRAPH: SEAN SMITH

Cash cuts squeeze the Tube

Gary Younge

THE best thing that could happen to the London Underground in the new year would be for it to suffer another huge breakdown like the one which stranded thousands of theatre-goers in November.

It would happen shortly before 10pm, just as John Major was facing a crucial vote that threatened his minority government. Among the people travelling to or from the West End would be four or five Tory MPs on their way to the Commons to save the day.

During the long wait for the train to start moving, the MPs would slowly realise they were going to miss the vote — and as a result possibly lose their jobs. The episode would be a reminder to whoever won the next election that they neglect the Tube at their peril. But, for now, it seems the Government is prepared to ignore all pleas for more investment from London Underground.

From this week, fares will rise by up to 8 per cent, confirming London's position as the capital with one of the most expensive tube systems in the world.

Yet whatever extra revenue has been gained as a result of the doubling in prices over the past decade has been dwarfed by the need for investment to replace old trains, extend lines and refurbish old equipment.

Unforeseen tunnelling problems have boosted the cost of building the extension to the Jubilee Line — which will link south London and the City — from £1.9 billion to £2.6 billion. But the Chancellor, Kenneth Clarke, earmarked only £100 million to help with overrun costs, insisting that London Underground take the responsibility for the rest. Finding the money will result in a cut in other Underground services and may even trigger another fare increase this year.

The 2.7 million daily passengers battle with overcrowding, delays, cancellations, unexplained stops in tunnels, and out-of-order lifts and escalators. A central London stretch of the Bakerloo line is currently closed for tunnel repairs, forcing hundreds of thousands of people to find alternative routes.

In October, a leaked document showed that London Transport intended to cut services and impose new speed restrictions because many parts of the network — much of which was built in Victorian and Edwardian times — were so dilapidated.

A month later, the system completely collapsed after a 30-year-old piece of equipment broke down, causing a power failure that trapped thousands of passengers underground for hours.

Those campaigning for a better service appear to sympathise with London Underground. "I can understand it if [London Underground] feel they have little alternative but to put up prices," says Stephen O'Brien, chief executive of London First, a consortium of business leaders pushing for better transport.

Andy Burns, of the Capital Transport Campaign, agrees. "People are going to be paying more money for a worse service," he said. "The only solution is more investment but London Underground is between a rock and a hard place."

Or, more precisely, between the Jubilee Line extension and number 11 Downing Street. After the Budget there was considerable complaint, but to little effect. London First pledged to contact all London MPs "to compel the government to reverse this outrageous decision" that London Underground bear the financial burden.

This year London Underground will have less than half the £700 million it needs every year for the next decade if it is to be restored to world-class standard.

Passengers on the Northern Line — known as the Misery Line — are waiting for the arrival of new trains later this year. But they may make little if any difference since modernisation of the line, including improvements to the track, signalling and power supplies, is under review.

Book prices soar after collapse of price-fixing

Lisa Buckingham

THE price of books has risen by more than twice the rate of inflation over the past year despite the collapse of the net book agreement (NBA), which was supposed to mean cheaper hardbacks and paperbacks.

According to the monitoring organisation Bookwatch, the end of price fixing has prompted publishers to increase the recommended retail price of their titles so that booksellers can then offer discounts.

Peter Harland of Bookwatch said: "Hardback and paperback fiction in particular have risen by more than the rate of inflation but this is then being discounted in the high street." He estimates that the benchmark price for a fiction title in hardback is now £16.99 or £17.99, with £8.99 and £9.99 for paperbacks.

Bookwatch says sales through its nationwide retail panel ended the year about 3 per cent down on 1995, but Mr Harland estimates that much of this will have shifted to the supermarkets and Woolworths, whose book sales are not yet included in industry-wide monitoring.

Although there are still sporadic outbreaks of substantial price discounts — Asda's decision to offer bestsellers at half price, for example — most retailers are offering only selective price cuts, unlike this time last year when Delia Smith's hugely successful Winter Collection was frequently sold at a loss.

It is understood that some publishers are now planning to mimic W H Smith's promotion of new authors in an effort to stimulate the market, which has experienced only modest rates of volume growth for more than a decade.

The statistics from Bookwatch follow a bleak period for big publishers that has seen profit warnings from players such as Hodder Headline, whose authors include John Le Carré, and a dramatic revenue slide from Rupert Murdoch's publishing arm, HarperCollins.

It was predicted that the end of price maintenance would stimulate demand and profits for the big publishers, but would rout small, inefficient booksellers.

Bankruptcies in the independent retail sector are understood to have remained at levels before the end of the agreement.

Stephen Moss adds: Publishers, a naturally optimistic breed, are bullish about the future. They say sales of bestsellers have been boosted, middle-range books are holding their own, and consumers are being attracted through sales in supermarkets and petrol stations.

"It has been good for business and has helped to expand readership," said *Roland Philipps,* publishing director of Hodder and Stoughton. "It has increased the sales of bestsellers — largely because of the extra outlets, which can now discount and say they are discounting."

The main impact has been in supermarkets, which are interested in stocking a small number of heavily discounted books. In the run-up to Christmas most big bookshops also discounted heavily on up to a dozen titles and made those the focus of their advertising.

Mr Philipps argues that the end of the NBA has forced publishers to be more imaginative. "It has made the book trade much more focused on marketing, and we now use price as a selling tool."

Louis Baum, editor of the Bookseller, while accepting that the effects have been less drastic than predicted, warns against drawing any conclusions yet. "Most people seem pleased to be able to use price, and many of those who were supporters of the NBA no longer argue for its return, but it is still too early to be confident about the impact of the changes.

"A few books are being discounted, but the majority have increased in price. The public are paying for the privilege of the bookseller offering them discounts."

Commitment of nations

THE UNITED NATIONS began the new year with a new secretary-general, but not yet with the new lease of life that it so badly needs. That is not the fault of either the retiring UN chief, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, or his successor, Kofi Annan, but of the member states, which have shown no enthusiasm at all for redefining and enlarging the UN's role in a post-cold war age. The only gain to be registered last year — the first in the second half-century of the UN's life — was a negative one. Washington's insistence on blackballing a second term for Mr Boutros-Ghali led, fortunately but fortuitously, to the selection of Mr Annan, who is the first career diplomat from within to rise to the top. His experience of peace-keeping should help generate more consistent policies in this essential area of UN activities and, as an insider, he is better placed to identify and defend the most vital points of the organisation. Yet it is a sad reflection that a new secretary-general should have to be judged primarily on his defensive skills in preventing the UN from being talked down and whittled away. The rash of disorders and crises across the world cry out rather for an active — even "aggressive" — policy of talking up the UN and promoting its internationalist role.

After the cold war came the false dawn of the Gulf war for the UN. At a triumphalist Security Council summit in January 1992, the world's leaders asserted their commitment to a stronger world body as guarantor to the much-proclaimed New World Order. Who now even remembers their fine words — how they pledged their "full support" to Mr Boutros-Ghali, their commitment to the Charter, and their guarantee that the UN would play a "central role" in the search for peace now facing the international community?

The reality was that within a few hours John Major was ruling out any thought of reforming the Security Council, while Washington was rubbishing any idea of breathing life into the UN's Military Staff Committee. The contemptuous rejection of any practical proposals to revitalise the UN continued right up into 1995, the 50th anniversary year, which had been expected to generate a more productive atmosphere for change. The only ideas that had much chance — because they happened to chime with US congressional prejudice — were those to slim down the UN's staff and cut its budget.

The 50th anniversary, ex-official Sir Brian Urquhart has said, started as a celebration and ended as a wake. The UN sorely needs more campaigners of his calibre to argue its indispensable role in fashioning strategies "for the decisive global problems of the next century". Many national UN associations are too defensive and reluctant to upset their own foreign ministries: they, too, should assert their case and lobby right out in the open. More research on the UN is also needed. In a recent book — The Ultimate Crime: Who Betrayed The UN And Why — Linda Melvern puts the root problem clearly. The Security Council "casually mandates the impossible, refuses adequate resources, blames the UN when things go wrong and walks away from problems when they entail risk and cost".

Is the UN to be redesignated as an international odd-jobs agency, picking up the pieces and doing the dirty work left undone by its members? Or is a serious effort going to be undertaken to make it *the apex of a new world community as envisaged in* 1945? There are plenty of proposals for effective reform: what is lacking now is the interest of peoples and the commitment of nations. Whether Mr Annan makes significant progress depends in the end on the member states who chose him. They will have to do much better than before.

Revolution on the streets

FOR INVENTION blended with satire the street theatre of the Belgrade protesters is in a class of its own. For more than 50 days they have managed to avoid giving President Milosevic the pretext for a crackdown. That became even less likely this week when General Perisic, chief of general staff, expressed tacit sympathy with their cause. Last Sunday's motorised gridlock mocked the official ban on demonstrations, which had been imposed on the grounds that they would "interfere with the traffic". It allowed drivers of beaten up old "Yugos" to make pertinent remarks about the president's fleet of BMWs. Their "breakdowns" were an apt metaphor for the shaky state of President Milosevic's rule — if it really is about to collapse.

This is a question in two parts. The first is whether the opposition can win, and the second is whether, if it does, it might offer a better alternative to the current government. Last week's statement from Serbian Orthodox Church leaders, calling on the president to acknowledge the results of the municipal elections, could be a turning point. But Mr Milosevic still has the police and the security services with him, and the ability to provoke a diversion elsewhere — for example in Kosovo where he has exploited ethnic tension with the Albanian population so successfully (and disastrously) before. At the moment, the odds remain even as to whether he will survive.

The second question can be answered more clearly. Yes, the main opposition leaders are more nationalist than democrat. It is true that they have flirted with the extreme right and are evasive on Bosnian Serb war crimes. But Serbia — as the Civic Alliance president, Vesna Pesic, argued last week — is the only European country where the government has not changed for half a century. The Belgrade street performers have begun at last to crack the mould.

Through Europe's winter rage

THE KING penguins in Zurich zoo enjoyed it, but an unfortunate hippo called Penelope in Udine died of pneumonia. With the new year came the ice age, and humans as well as animals reacted differently. It may have been fine for brisk country walks, but was inconvenient and perhaps dangerous for long journeys home. Across Europe, as a continent-wide cold spell held its grip, the weather became a serious business, exposing the social gaps into which the poor and homeless can fall as easily as if they were crevasses in the Alpine ice.

In western Europe, including Britain, only a handful of lives has been lost in each country in the kind of accident that is almost inevitable, although statistically rare. But eastern Europe is a different picture. In Poland the big freeze has taken 28 lives, and the Markot non-government group, which operates shelters for the homeless has set up a hotline to identify those threatened by the extreme cold. Bulgaria has suffered 19 deaths since Christmas Eve.

In Romania, no one can count for sure: the independent newspaper Adevaral reported that 43 people had frozen to death in Bucharest since Christmas, of whom 28 were homeless. One confirmed statistic is that four people died in an unheated mental hospital. Hungary has lost five people, homeless or drunk. For the former socialist countries, the joys of market capitalism are not unconfined.

In Britain, we have got by so far with the usual crop of minor accidents and a few tragedies. But bad weather should focus our minds on what the future may bring. Out of the confusion over global warming one feature emerges distinctly: the weather will become more contrasted, summers *will be hotter and* winters will be colder. (And even without global warming we might be due for more cold spells anyhow.) Yes, more people have central heating and double glazing: lives are no longer shortened by atmospheric pollution from millions of coal fires. But economic changes in the system of power generation — privatisation, in short — are likely to reduce the margin of error and increase the risk of the National Grid shutting down. The Grid can no longer require power stations to run at full capacity; it can only request them to do so. Ordering a blackout may become easier than meeting demand.

Not all of this demand for power is essential, Britain, like all other developed countries, is incredibly profligate with its consumption, and successive governments have failed to tackle energy savings with any show of seriousness. But those who suffer most need it most: just as customers with prepaid meters pay higher rates than the affluent — and may have to disconnect themselves "voluntarily". For those at the bottom of the consumption ladder, the frost can be doubly cruel.

Coke and Big Macs aren't the real thing

Martin Woollacott

WHEN German prisoners of war arrived in New Jersey during the second world war, they broke into excited chatter on seeing a Coca-Cola advertisement. "We are surprised you have Coca-Cola here, too," they told their guards. The story, told by Mark Prendergast in his history of the company, suggests the theory that global food habits promote global peace rests on slender foundations.

Yet the growth of branded food habits is such a feature of our times that it demands investigation. It is not a new development to connect Coca-Cola or Kellogg's Cornflakes with harmony both of the inner man and of the whole human race. Such products, appearing in many industrialised countries at about the same time a century ago, were promoted as tonics and magical substances, not simple victuals. Their makers often implied dietary revolution was part of a more general revolution that could lead to the most positive developments. When Coca-Cola gathered 200 young people on a hillside and had them sing "I'd like to teach the world to sing in perfect harmony", it was only continuing an already established tradition.

The American fast-food chains that emerged in a big way in the early 1950s operated on a different basis from the pseudo-medical foundation of Coca-Cola and Kellogg. This other principle was the democratisation of meat. In societies *which, in memory if not in present* fact, had never had enough meat, the daily availability, at a low price, of hot beef and chicken was a historic achievement. With every hamburger the ordinary man enjoyed not just a meat patty, but a taste of the privilege that in a half-remembered past had been confined to the upper class. In America, which had admittedly always been a meat-eating country, new farming techniques allowed a breakthrough to hitherto impossible levels of cheapness.

With cheapness came speed. A Burger King founder noted: "There are only two things our customers have, time and money, and they don't like spending either." In the early 1950s, McDonald's, Burger King and Kentucky Fried Chicken began to take their modern form. Of those early chains, only Wimpy (which, though originally American, spread in Britain and elsewhere under Lyons' aegis) failed to make the big league.

That was because it was not American enough. Branded global food habits are almost all American; French brandy and champagne aside. Ethnic restaurants may abound, but the transnational fast-food chains, the soft drinks and the cereals are largely American, in style if not actual ownership. The contemporaries of Coca-Cola, the Italian and French health wines, and later, British products such as Vimto, Tizer and Irn Bru might, under different political and cultural circumstances, have triumphed globally instead of their American rivals.

But the customers were not only eating and drinking health and privilege. They were, and are, eating and drinking America. Outside America, what was being consumed was a symbol of the power and affluence of the US. McDonald's local partner in Japan suggested hamburgers would in time transform Japanese from short and yellow to tall and white.

In eastern Europe the McDonald's hamburger performs a different function from the one it performs in America. In the latter, it is, if not the food of the poor, a food the poor can afford. In Russia, it is the food of the rich, to the extent that McDonald's has few outlets outside Moscow because there are still too few capitalists to eat the product, a report in the Washington Post has revealed.

In the United States, the America being consumed is the supposedly simpler and better America of the past, the America of soda fountains and church socials. Or it is a more orderly America. As one customer of a Harlem McDonald's, quoted by Prendergast, told a Wall Street Journal writer: "Ain't no hip-hop here, ain't no profanity. The picture, the plants, the way people keep things neat here, it makes you feel like you're in civilisation."

Civilisation! Yet it is not such a joke. The fast-food chains do represent a kind of order. They utilise the attractions of replication and common ritual, the comfort of places where staff and customers know their roles, where there is no uncertainty, few choices, everything is familiar and known. The same is true of products such as Coca-Cola, as the company discovered when it changed the formula. Coca-Cola drinkers, Prendergast says, were people who needed reassurance that some things would always stay *the same. "Classic Coke" had to be* brought back, in haste.

WHETHER the world-wide penetration of American food products represents, as Thomas Friedman of the New York Times suggested in his recent half-serious but catchy thesis, an opening up by countries to the international economy, tying them together in a way that makes it unlikely they will make war on one another is to be doubted. McDonald's is just a detail in such tendencies, not a cause or even a symptom of change.

Equally doubtful is his suggestion that McDonald's has achieved some balance between global and local forces. These chains could not exist without the linkages between food and local production, between food and skilled cooking, and between food and health, having been weakened — developments for which they are not responsible but which have many unhappy consequences.

Their claims to promote community, or world peace, are flimsy. Insofar as they may help toward such worthy objectives, they usurp the religious and political institutions that ought to be fulfilling such functions. Soft drinks and meat chains offer a notion of community that must have some connection with the sacramental food traditions of the past.

This shows how consumption has taken on some attributes of religion as well as taking over some of religion's organisational techniques. "Our work is a religion, rather than a business," a Coca-Cola executive said. But perhaps Ray Kroc, who made McDonald's what it is today, pinpointed the real key to success: "Nothing in the world will take the place of persistence."

Peru's one-sided amnesty is key to crisis

Alain Abellard in Lima

IN JUNE 1995, the Peruvian Congress granted an amnesty to all security officers and government officials who had violated human rights in the course of the government's 15-year fight against terrorism. Francisco Soberon, head of Peru's human rights organisation Aproeh, is in no doubt that the unilateral amnesty of those responsible for some of the very worst acts of repression in Peru was one of the reasons why Tupac Amaru guerrillas went into action against the Japanese embassy in the capital, Lima, last month.

The text of the amnesty did not bother with window-dressing. It simply pardoned all army and police officers who had been "the subject of a complaint, an investigation, a charge, a trial or a prison sentence". All legal proceedings against them were immediately dropped, and the few, mostly middle-ranking, officers already jailed for human rights violations were released.

Peru is not Guatemala, where the law of national reconciliation that accompanied the end of the civil war applied to both camps and excluded common-law offences not directly connected with the armed conflict.

When a Peruvian investigating magistrate made the mistake of ruling that the 1995 amnesty should not apply to the massacre of 12 men, three women and a child in the Lima neighbourhood of Barrios Altos in November 1991, the authorities immediately beefed up the amnesty law by adding a provision that barred judges from ruling on its legality or scope of application.

Jarama Sinecio, a retired major-general who played a key role in devising anti-terrorist strategy under the previous Peruvian president, Alan Garcia, describes the amnesty law as "indecent". He is convinced it covers actions that have nothing to do with military operations.

"Those responsible for the massacre at La Cantuta University, where nine students and their professor suspected of belonging to the Shining Path were kidnapped, tortured and killed, will never be brought to book," he says. "Everyone knows they were killed by the army intelligence unit, Grupo Colina. It wasn't a military operation, but a covert action."

Sinecio, too, believes that this kind of injustice partly explains terrorist actions. Since the beginning of the present crisis, the leader of the Tupac Amaru rebels in the Lima embassy, Nestor Cerpa, has repeatedly denounced the lack of clemency shown to imprisoned activists belonging to his movement.

Soberon argues that the government of President Alberto Fujimori has been acting exactly as if it were carrying out a military-style pacification operation. Statistics suggest that Fujimori's policies have been paying off: thanks to the arrest of the main leaders of the Shining Path and Tupac Amaru, and the adoption of special legislation, he managed to bring down the number of politically related deaths from 3,400 in 1990 to 520 in 1995.

But, says Edgardo Caceres of Aproeh, Fujimori refused to take into account the reasons behind the guerrillas' violent actions and failed to realise that reconciliation was a factor in the equation.

The government contends that the amnesty law has been counter-balanced by legislation that allows those who repent to enjoy improved prison conditions and reductions in their sentences. "That is absolutely incorrect," Soberon says. "The law is an informer's law, which has sent 1,200 people to jail."

The flaws in the repentance legislation are perfectly illustrated by the case of Salvador Caro, a doctor. After being forced by Shining Path rebels to treat one of their injured men, he was denounced, charged with "active complicity in terrorism and treason", and given a 20-year prison sentence.

His case was taken up by human rights activists and passed on to a special commission responsible for looking into miscarriages of justice. Caro was pardoned and released after spending a month in jail. But he was also sacked from the hospital where he had worked for 24 years. He is now looking for a job.

Corruption, endemic in the army and police force, also adds to the problems.

On top of that, prisoners frequently "disappear", and Soberon says the use of torture is "systematic". And human rights activists are alarmed at the way industrial unrest is dealt with by special legislation normally applied only to terrorist-related crimes.

Ricardo Letts, a leftwing activist, says: "The reason the intelligence services proved to be completely ineffectual when the Japanese embassy was attacked was that they were taken by surprise. They couldn't see it coming because they were more concerned with keeping tabs on political opponents and trade-union activists than on terrorists."

Caceres points out that while the Shining Path and Tupac Amaru may have been defeated militarily, the government has failed to destroy the ideology that spawned them because it has never tackled the root causes of armed violence.

He believes the only answer is for a commission to be set up to examine crimes committed by all the leading players in the conflict, from the army and security forces to the Shining Path and Tupac Amaru. "Otherwise, what happened at the Japanese embassy could happen again — in a month, in a year . . ."

(January 1)

Political tension rises in Beirut

Lucien George in Beirut

ALTHOUGH Lebanon was *promised aid worth* $3.2 billion by a group of "friendly" countries in Washington last week, the predominant feeling in Beirut as 1996 came to a close was one of gloom and doom. Political unrest resulting from breaches of individual freedoms was compounded by a depressed economy, as reflected in sluggish sales in the run-up to the festive season.

Matters were only made worse when a Syrian minibus was machine-gunned in a Christian area on December 18. The shooting, which left the minibus driver dead and one passenger wounded, was the first serious incident of its kind in six years.

So far no group has claimed responsibility for the attack. But the Lebanese government and its Syrian protectors, referring to recent remarks by the Israeli prime minister, Binyamin Netanyahu, about carrying out operations within Lebanon, accuse Israel of having organised the shooting, as well as some other less serious attacks. They claim its aim is to destabilise Lebanon.

The Lebanese president, Elias Hrawi, said: "A very small minority, manipulated by Israel or by others, is still trying to obstruct the internal peace process." He once again rejected two Israeli proposals — the "Lebanon first" option, whereby Israel would enter into an agreement with Lebanon before doing any deal with Syria, and the setting up of a Jordanian-Egyptian interposition force in southern Lebanon.

Similarly, the Syrian government newspaper Teshrine has accused Israel of "constantly acting in such a way as to destabilise Lebanon and thwart its reconstruction efforts".

Whether it was the result of Israeli manipulation or extreme Lebanese nationalism, the minibus incident provided the authorities with an ideal opportunity *to justify a series of raids* on Christian opposition circles by the Lebanese security service, in conjunction with its Syrian counterpart, with little or no regard for legality.

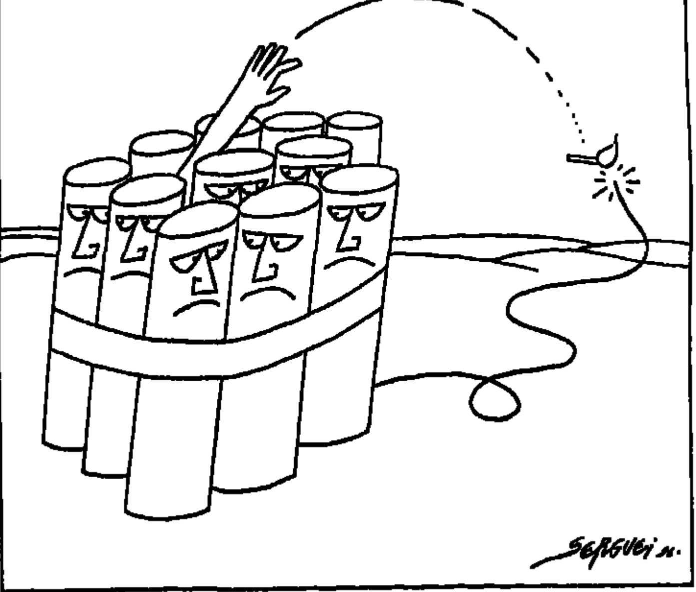
In the space of a week, 48 members of the Christian opposition, most of them supporters of General Michel Aoun or Dory Chamoun's National Liberal Party, were arrested. Eleven of them are believed to be still behind bars.

The swoop prompted the Maronite Christian patriarch, Monsignor Nasrallah Sfeir, to denounce in his Christmas message "this hounding of the Lebanese, which gives them the feeling of being undesirable in their own country; our society is divided, with victor and vanquished, oppressor and oppressed."

Chamoun seems to have been singled out for blame. He is accused of having recently met the Israeli prime minister in the Jordanian town of Aqaba. Twenty years ago, his father Camille Chamoun had a similar encounter with the then Israeli prime minister, Yitzhak Rabin. That meeting led to an alliance between Israel and the Christian Lebanese camp. Today, however, the Christians seem to be in no mood to go down that dangerous road.

Sources within the Lebanese security forces say that the aim of the crackdown was to put across two messages. The first, aimed at the Israelis, is that Lebanon is not as easily destabilised as it was in the past. The second, for Syrian consumption, is that the Beirut authorities are perfectly capable of controlling the situation. But then, in present-day Lebanon, sending messages to the Syrians is a purely notional exercise.

(December 28)



Cruel Ugandan rebel group claims divine inspiration

Jean Hélène in Gulu

"YOU KNOW you're not allowed to ride a bicycle!" the rebels yelled as they stopped Anthony Opio on a country road. The old man was going with his son and grandson to sell a bag of beans at Latinyer market.

Without further ado, the rebels tied up the cyclists, dragged them to the side of the road and hacked one foot off each man. Before making off they were careful to smash up the forbidden bicycles. "Without the use of my leg it's as if I was dead," Opio mumbled as he lay in hospital in Lachor, where he had been taken a few days later with a horribly infected stump.

The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), now as big a menace as landmines are to Acholi villagers in northern Uganda, is a strange Christian-inspired guerrilla movement that has devastated the region of Gulu and Kitgum for the past 10 years. It is supported by Sudan's Islamist regime, which apparently wants to punish Uganda for backing Christian rebels in southern Sudan.

In November, bicycles became the latest of the LRA's anathemas. There is a logic to its actions, however repulsive they may be: a bicycle is a fairly rapid means of transport for anyone wishing to tell the regular army that guerrillas are present in a village.

But pig-owners, too, now risk amputation: the LRA's mystical leader, Joseph Kony, has decided the animal is impure. Deserters say the LRA leadership is convinced that "anyone who walks in pig's excrement loses all ardour for battle".

Two years ago, the same guerrillas used to slice off Acholi villagers' lips, noses or ears to discourage them from joining the Ugandan army at a time when it was trying to recruit local militiamen.

The "Lord's fighters" now have such a terrible reputation that when they are known to be in the vicinity of Gulu villagers flood into the town for safety. Piero Corti, the chief doctor at Lachor hospital, says: "In all my 35 years here, I've never seen such terrified people."

Kidnapping is another LRA speciality. In mid-December, a column of guerrillas is believed to have crossed into Sudan with 300 teenagers they had kidnapped, intending to re-educate and train them for armed combat.

The story told by Julius Otim, aged 19, is typical: "They arrested me as I was going to school and forced me to follow them and carry their equipment. We walked for days. Those who couldn't keep going or who tried to escape were shot.

"We finally arrived at the Kit camp in Sudan. They gave us guns and told us how to use them. They also harangued us, saying that with the help of the Holy Spirit we were going to liberate the Acholi and Lango peoples from the domination of Museveni [the Ugandan president], who had plundered their herds. Then we were moved back into Uganda. One day the army attacked our camp and I fled. I was able to get back to my village. But now the village has been evacuated because people are afraid the rebels will come and take revenge for my escape."

For a long time the LRA rebels were in league with the villagers, who are Acholis and Langos like themselves. But the atrocities they carried out have alienated the population, and they have to use terrorist methods to operate safely.

"It's our own children who are doing this to us!" laments an old man. His opinion is shared by most Acholis, who are torn between tribal solidarity and condemnation of the kinsmen who have caused them terrible suffering.

(December 28)

Shamans breathe life into cave art

Emmanuel de Roux

Les Chamanes De La Préhistoire
Jean Clottes and
David Lewis-Williams
Seuil 120pp 249 francs

LES CHAMANES De La Préhistoire (The Shamans Of Prehistory) is a book that is bound to cause controversy. It advances new solutions to questions that have been debated for more than 100 years: why did our distant ancestors leave drawings in deep, pitch-dark caves? What do the rock paintings mean?

The authors bring together their areas of specialised knowledge. Jean Clottes is a distinguished French prehistorian and expert on cave art. The South African archaeologist David Lewis-Williams has spent years studying the art and beliefs of the Bushmen, one of the remaining hunter-gatherer communities in the world.

What prompted the authors to reinterpret prehistoric art was a series of recent discoveries, in particular the Cosquer and Chauvet caves in France and the Foz Côa site in Portugal, which have undermined some of the best-established theories on the subject.

The earliest explanation of rock paintings and carvings was straightforward: they had no purpose other than the decoration of prehistoric "homes". The authority who in 1864 wrote that "the leisure of the easy life gives birth to art" clearly believed in Jean-Jacques Rousseau's notion of the "noble savage".

At the turn of the century, the anachronistic theory of art for art's sake was abandoned, for it failed to explain why paintings were executed in deep meandering caves, far from areas of habitation. Prehistorians such as Salomon Reinach began to promote the idea of totemism.

Ethnological research showed there might be a correlation between human groups and animal or vegetable species. Such groups worshipped and identified with their totem. But that did not explain why animals were often depicted with wounds caused by projectiles. Surely that was incompatible with the respect due to a totem?

Reinach himself eventually abandoned his explanation and devised the theory of the "magic of hunting". Primitive man thought that certain practices could affect the course of events. Representing an animal was a way of dominating it.

Magic ceremonies, performed in secret but given a visual expression, had three main aims: they set out to increase the number of animals hunted and killed, improve the fertility of edible species, and help destroy large predators.

Those who believed magic to be the fundamental driving force behind cave art remained in the majority until the fifties, when André Leroi-Gourhan demolished their attractive theoretical edifice. He pointed out that only a tiny percentage of animals showed any sign of having been hit by a weapon. Sexual allusions were even more rare. And what was the meaning of the hands stencilled on to cave walls, or the human or grotesque figures that had nothing to do with the "natural" world?

Leroi-Gourhan and his colleague Annette Laming-Emperaire offered a different explanation. The cave itself was a structured space: its spatial organisation was well thought out. Paintings were positioned in the cave in relation to entrances, dead ends and other topographical features.

It was no coincidence that the most frequently represented animals were bison and horses, or that they were accompanied by other species according to very specific rules. After drawing up an exhaustive inventory, Leroi-Gourhan posited the existence of a binary system of sexual symbolism, which brought together bisons (the female pole) and horses (the male pole), and which was reiterated by geometrical signs (a long thin sign represented the penis, and a thick sign the vulva).

As research into palaeolithic art continued, this structuralist approach came in for mounting criticism. The drawings did no doubt represent a system of myths and ideas, but in no way did that explain why they were executed in deep caves.

The sexual typology was based on subjective criteria. Why would the Magdalenian hunter have chosen the bison, whose male attributes he conscientiously depicted, to symbolise the female? And did not the dividing up of caves into distinct areas also depend on rather over-subjective criteria?

As it turns out, Leroi-Gourhan's somewhat rigid chronological classification of how styles evolved has been invalidated by the Chauvet datings so far carried out. The Leroi-Gourhan school did however have a beneficial effect on the study of cave art. "The importance of the cave in terms of choice and, probably, meaning can no longer be challenged," write Clottes and Lewis-Williams.

"The way drawings are positioned on the rock depending on its relief and topography has become a fundamental element of modern research. The choice of animal species obeys a logic that has nothing to do with whether they are edible or not. It is now clear that some animals were preferred and others spurned according to cultural criteria."

What those criteria were remains a mystery. Should all attempts at interpretation be abandoned? Clottes and Lewis-Williams think not. They see a parallel between cave art and shamanism.

Shamanism is a system of beliefs that includes healing techniques, rituals designed to affect events (hunting) and the elements (bad weather), prophecy, witchcraft, and the possibility of communicating with spirits. Trances, which can be produced in various ways, are the means used by shamans to take on those powers.

The authors point out that all cultures, including those of the palaeolithic period, have been familiar with the distorted state of consciousness that often produces art. One such culture is that of the hunter-gatherers: there is a parallel between the shamanistic art of San Bushmen in South Africa, which was thoroughly studied in the 19th and 20th centuries, and examples of palaeolithic art studied in Europe.

On both continents — and both today and in the distant past — "paintings and engravings do not represent real animals that are hunted for food in an actual landscape; rather they are visions drawn from the subterranean world of spirits because of their supernatural powers and ability to help the shamans."

Clottes and Lewis-Williams's theory, which is backed up by much ethnological and neuropsychical evidence, is based on a detailed knowledge of dozens of "sanctuaries". It is a tempting hypothesis, and one that has been elaborated with great erudition and enthusiasm. But that will not prevent some people from trying to shoot it down in flames.

(December 13)



Animal magic . . . a bison in the Chauvet caves, an image frequently represented in wall paintings

Breaking Bordeaux's slave-trade taboo

Philippe Simonnot

Bordeaux, Port Négrier
Eric Saugera
Karthala 382pp 180 francs

L'Argent De La Traite
Olivier Pétré-Grenouilleau
Aubier 423pp 140 francs

THE French slave trade reached its peak during the Age of Enlightenment. The organisation of this "superior branch of commerce", as it was described at the time by the Bordeaux chamber of commerce, was not easy.

One difficulty was the difference in value of a negro and of raw sugar in terms of a ship's internal capacity. The discrepancy meant that traders had to use more ships for the direct transport of sugar from the Antilles to France than on the so-called "triangular" trade route, which required ships to put in at African ports to take on their cargoes of slaves.

Another problem was the huge expense of filling out a slave ship, which required several different traders to pool their resources. They also had to find an insurer, as well as a captain and crew prepared to embark on a long and perilous voyage.

The proportion of male and female slaves was not left to chance either: if too many women were taken to the colonies, they would be likely to reproduce, and the resulting increase in the black population would be prejudicial to the slave trade.

These and many other equally instructive and fascinating details are to be found in Eric Saugera's excellent book, Bordeaux, Port Négrier. Coming after pioneering work on the slave-trade economy by historians such as Jean Tarrade and Serge Daget, Saugera's discussion of the issue is particularly interesting because it breaks a taboo: Bordeaux was one of the main French slave ports from the 17th to the 19th century, and briefly (1802-04) overtook Nantes as the one with the biggest volume of trade.

But whereas Nantes has acknowledged its slave-trading past — it mounted an exhibition on the subject four years ago — there is, as Saugera puts it, "a blank" in the historiography of Bordeaux. Apart from a few black-painted masks representing the heads of slaves on the façades of buildings in Rue Fernand-Philippart and on the quais, the city's 18th century mansions give no hint of what some of their former occupants were up to.

It is not widely known, for example, that a slave market used to be held in Place de la Bourse. Saugera shows that during the period under consideration some 500 slave expeditions were organised out of Bordeaux, resulting in the deportation of 130,000-150,000 captives from the east and west coasts of Africa to French islands across the Atlantic and in the Indian Ocean.

The city's collective amnesia today mirrors the clear conscience of those who were engaged in the slave trade. Working conditions in the colonies were deemed too harsh for freemen.

France's prosperity was closely bound up with the prosperity of its colonies, as can be seen from the 1763 Treaty of Paris, which ended the Seven Years War. France gave ground in India, ceded West Louisiana to Spain and let the British have Senegal and Canada. But it preferred to take control of the Lesser Antilles because of the guaranteed supply of tropical products, which were in increasing demand.

But there were also people who attempted to justify the slave trade on rational ideological grounds, claiming, for example, that France was doing Africans a service by "rescuing" them from the barbarity of petty tyrants.

And anyway, were they really human beings? Even Montesquieu, who was well known for his militant opposition to slavery, came out with some pretty questionable theories in his 1748 book, De L'Esprit Des Lois (The Spirit Of Laws). He wrote, among other things, that the mind is less offended by slavery in countries "where heat enervates the body", and that "almost all the people of the south are to some extent in a violent state unless they are slaves".

Following an uprising in St Domingue (present-day Haiti), the Convention abolished slavery in 1794. It was brought back by Napoleon in 1802, but prohibited by Louis XVIII in 1814. This was because the British, who had outlawed slavery in 1807, were able, as victors, to lay down the law.

Their motives were apparently humanitarian. But they were able to draw on an abundant and easily exploited pool of labour in India, and therefore needed slaves less than rival powers. The latter were weakened by the abolition of the slave trade, while the British found a substitute in the coolie trade.

However, French slave-traders continued to operate illegally out of Bordeaux and, above all, Nantes. Nantes' history as a slave port is charted by Olivier Pétré-Grenouilleau in L'Argent De La Traite (Slave-Trade Money). It is a story of economic failure. Despite being France's biggest centre of slave trading the city never took off economically. The author contends that Nantes remained fixated on an idealised image of the Ancien Régime at least until 1848, and even to some extent until 1914, as though it were unable to exorcise the curse of "black gold".

(November 29)

Le Monde

Directeur: Jean-Marie Colombani

Protests Show the Gentle Side of Serbs

COMMENT
Jim Hoagland

THE peaceful protests that have filled the snowy streets of Belgrade for weeks have caused U.S. and West European governments to reassess their once close working partnership with Serbia's political boss, Slobodan Milosevic. That is a good first step.

But the brave challenge that Serb pensioners, workers, students and others have mounted to Milosevic's rule should also bring a broader reflection in the West about the narrow, manipulative and inadequate responses from the outside world to the Balkan crises of the 1990s.

The street protests change a perception abroad of Serbs as a monolithic, irrational and loathsome tribe ruled by ancient hatreds and blood lusts. In showing their divisions, the Serbs have also shown an essential decency that the demands of war and ethnic solidarity had obscured.

Media coverage and official condemnations rightly focused over that period on rape camps, summary mass executions and the forced evacuations of entire cities inhabited by Bosnian Muslims as the defining expressions of Serb nationalism. The open opposition now to Milosevic's dictatorial rule and his attempt to nullify local election losses cannot erase those images.

But the protests show that there are other expressions of Serb nationalism. One valuable by-product of the gathering showdown between Milosevic and the protesters could be a broader understanding in the outside world of what nationalism is, and is not, in the interconnected, interfaced world of the end of the millennium.

That complex subject is addressed in a new essay by Robert H. Wiehe, professor of history at Northwestern University, in the winter issue of World Policy Journal. In it, Wiehe recalls that at the dawn of the 20th century, "Nationalism was a liberal promise of freedom and fulfillment for countless millions." But over the next 10 decades it "fell into bad company," Wiehe observes. Even worse, "it came to be seen as the very antithesis of a conviction that modern weaponry, global economics and planetary ecology made increasingly urgent: the universality of the human condition." Wiehe offers this useful definition of nationalism: "A political expression of the desire among people who believe they have a common ancestry and a common destiny to govern themselves in a place peculiarly identified with their history and its fulfillment."

Americans increasingly came to see others' nationalism as irrational, destructive or inconvenient, especially as U.S. interests in global economics and fostering international political stability grew. The breakup of the Soviet empire briefly restored the luster of political nationalism, as Central Europe emerged from occupation. But wars in the former Soviet republics and the bloody breakup of Yugoslavia quickly made nationalism a dirty word again.

The atrocities committed by Serb forces against the Bosnians turned Serb nationalism into a handy tool that outsiders used to justify preconceived opinions. Those who demanded intervention to stop the human suffering said that an insatiable drive for a Greater Serbia had to be met by outside force. That view turned out to be right, if somewhat overstated. Those who opposed intervention cited the ancient hatreds and implacable nationalisms of the Balkans to justify the conclusion that it would be foolhardy to intervene.

General Barry McCaffrey (now the Clinton administration's drug czar) told Congress in 1992 that the Joint Chiefs of Staff had concluded that it would take a year of airstrikes to tame Serbia in an operation that would be more difficult than fighting guerrillas in Vietnam. In fact it took a handfull of Nato airstrikes and a blitzkrieg by Croatia's small army in 1995 to bring Milosevic to the peace table. He seems to be on the eighth of his nine lives, in large part because he lost the war to Croatia, failed to secure a clear victory in Bosnia and wrecked Serbia's once healthy economy.

He still has enough police and military muscle to clear the streets and stay in office a while longer. But Serbia and history seem to have used him up and will soon spit him out. The protests are catalyst and testimony to that outcome.

The Serbs will then decide what kind of nation they will be next. The gentle uprising of December shows that their options — and those of the outside world — are not dictated irrevocably by ancient hatreds.



Serb opposition leader Vuk Draskovic (centre) with supporters in Belgrade last week PHOTO:YANNIS BEHRAKIS

U.S. Holds Key to Ban of Land Mines

Dana Priest

THE international campaign to ban anti-personnel land mines is at a crossroads, and President Clinton could determine which way it goes.

He is set to decide whether to join several dozen countries led by Canada that will begin next month to craft an international treaty banning the use, export, production and stockpiling of anti-personnel mines. Although China and Russia say they will not sign, supporters of the treaty said it would be a quick first step toward worldwide ban of the controversial weapons estimated to wound or kill 500 persons each week.

The alternative for Clinton is to adopt a slower approach supported by the Pentagon and many in the White House. It calls for negotiating a ban through the U.N. Conference on Disarmament in search of a broad consensus shared by Beijing and Moscow, even though that is likely to take years to achieve.

About 50 countries have expressed support for the faster but less-inclusive Canadian effort, known as the Ottawa Conference. Backers include Afghanistan, Angola and Cambodia, which all have serious land mine problems.

The goal is to write a legally binding treaty that would be signed in December by as many countries as possible. Supporters hope the agreement will stigmatize the weapons, and other countries eventually would feel compelled to sign, too. A first working session is set for February in Vienna. Belgium, Norway and Switzerland have offered to host follow-up meetings.

China and Russia already have indicated they would not sign, Canadian and U.S. officials say. Supporters say that if Washington bows out, the pressure will be off other wary countries, such as Britain and France, to participate.

"We're not trying to capture the entire world, but establish a moral authority," said Robert Lawson, a top Canadian disarmament official. "It would be important to have the U.S. on board. It would turn the tide."

The second track through the Conference on Disarmament, a famously slow body, aims to create a ban that all member countries would sign. Critics and supporters alike acknowledge that it could take years to reach even a narrow agreement.

The Clinton administration is split on the subject, "in introspective disarray," as one disarmament official put it. Some in the State Department favor lending U.S. prestige to the Canadian effort. But Clinton in the past has taken his cue on the issue from the Pentagon, which favors the slower approach. Pentagon officials declined to discuss their views.

Members of the National Security Council are said to be leaning toward the Pentagon's view. But a high-ranking NSC official suggested recently that it might be possible to pursue both tracks simultaneously by giving rhetorical support to the Ottawa Conference without committing to sign a treaty.

"Ottawa gives an impulse to the goal we ultimately support," the official said. "Our aim is to take advantage of the leadership and priority the Canadians have given to move toward our objective and to find a way to involve more countries" to sign onto a ban, the official said.

The non-governmental organizations that have led the international campaign fear a two-track strategy by the United States would be harmful. "All kinds of countries sitting on the fence" will be able to continue waiting while "it will quickly be perceived that the United States is putting all its diplomatic clout into the [Conference on Disarmament] process," said Stephen Goose, director of Human Rights Watch arms control project.

Activists who fear Clinton is leaning toward the slower route say their best hope is that he may not make a final decision until his new foreign policy team is confirmed. Two members of the team appear to be committed to banning land mines sooner rather than later, activists believe.

Madeleine K. Albright, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations who has been nominated to be the next secretary of state, has been a strong proponent of a ban. Former Sen. William S. Cohen (R-Maine), nominated to be secretary of defense, voted for a limited ban adopted by Congress recently.

There are an estimated 110 million land mines in the ground in 64 countries, and most of their victims are civilians. Land mines are popular among armies and insurgencies because they are cheap to buy but expensive to clear. At least 29 U.N. and NATO troops have been killed by mines in Bosnia, and 255 wounded.

Syria Bomb Attack Kills 11

John Lancaster in Cairo

BREAKING its customary silence on matters of internal security, Syria acknowledged that 11 people were killed and 42 wounded in a bomb attack on a crowded bus in Damascus last week. The government blamed the attack on Israel.

In a brief statement to Syria's official news agency, a government spokesman said the bomb exploded a few minutes after the vehicle left a Damascus bus terminal around noon, filled with passengers bound for New Year's Eve celebrations with relatives in other cities.

The explosion followed several attacks on Syrians last month in Lebanon, where Syria keeps 35,000 troops, and came at a time of growing tension between Syria and Israel over the breakdown in Middle East peace negotiations. Syria's accusation of Israeli involvement in the attack — which would amount to an act of war — marks a further deterioration in the relationship between the two enemies.

"This terrorist, cowardly and criminal action comes within the framework of threats launched recently by Israeli officials that aim at killing the peace process," the Syrian spokesman said.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's top aide, David Bar-Illan, called the Syrian allegations "sheer nonsense," Associated Press reported from Israel.

Syria's autocratic government, led by President Hafez Assad, normally does not comment on reports of internal unrest. It appears to have done so this time only after reports of the blast began to filter out through international news agencies.

Assad has not faced a serious internal threat since an uprising by militant Islamic fundamentalists in the early 1980s. Last spring, however, mysterious explosions were reported in Damascus, Aleppo and Latakia, on the Mediterranean coast.

In neighboring Lebanon last month, gunmen fired on a Syrian-registered minibus near Tabarja, 15 miles north of Beirut, killing the Syrian driver and injuring a passenger, according to Arabic press reports. In a second incident the same day, a bomb detonated near a Syrian intelligence post in Tripoli, in northern Lebanon. Two Syrian intelligence officers reportedly were injured. A Syrian military spokesman said the explosion occurred when a detonator was inadvertently burned with a pile of trash.

Syria dominates Lebanon's government, which responded to the minibus attack by rounding up Christian Lebanese opposed to the Syrian presence in their country. Lebanon's prosecutor general, Adnan Addoum, said at the time, "Israel's hand is not far from what is taking place." Israel and Syria have recently accused each other of preparing for war.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
January 12 1997



Floods rise to the roofs of houses in Arboga, California

PHOTOGRAPH: BRIAN DAVIES

Thousands Stranded by Northwest Floods

Ann Grimes in San Francisco

TENS OF thousands of Northern California residents remained stranded last weekend as swollen rivers taxed the state's vast flood-control system, causing levees to break and release torrents of muddy water into rural communities in the Central Valley.

President Clinton approved federal disaster assistance for 37 counties in California and for 13 in Idaho as people throughout the Pacific Northwest tried to mop up after more than a week of stormy weather.

Warm winds and heavy rain melted the winter snowpack in the region's mountains, turning cliffs into waterfalls and flooding valleys. The storms were blamed for 23 deaths in a five-state area.

Precipitation was negligible in California, but there could be sprinkles ahead. "The weather forecast is for showers; that's less than rain. We're looking ahead to several days that may not be dry, but it's not getting worse," said Dan McCanta of the Office of Emergency Services in Yolo County. People there had to be evacuated when the Sacramento River overflowed its banks.

Emergency officials also were busy in Stanislaus County south of Sacramento, where the Tuolumne River turned vast expanses of farmland near Modesto into what one area resident described as "a lake."

State officials continued emergency efforts in Yuma and Sutter counties, where more than 100,000 people were evacuated and the towns of Olivehurst and Marysville were practically submerged. Rescue teams went from "spot to spot" by helicopter and boat to pluck residents from rooftops as the water rose, according to Steve Martarano of the California Office of Emergency Services.

Martarano attributed most of the flooding to the failure of levees, which, with reservoirs, dams, channels and bypasses, are designed to control the flow of water through the farmland of the Central and San Joaquin valleys and on to San Francisco Bay, and ultimately into the Pacific Ocean.

As the snow from the Sierra melts and flows into reservoirs and rivers, dam operators must release water to allow reservoirs to absorb runoff but not spill so much that they cause more flooding.

Residents of San Joaquin County were evacuated when a levee there broke and the San Joaquin River overflowed, threatening the city of Stockton. To help save Stockton from flooding, officials planned to punch a hole in the levee to divert water to unpopulated areas. Other levees had been breached last week in similar efforts to spare populated areas.

A few residents of Guerneville were permitted to return home to begin cleanup as the Russian River receded, but tens of thousands of others were stuck.

New Yorkers Regain Mean Streets

COMMENT
Richard Cohen

THE CAR was parked on East 84th, near the corner of Park Avenue, and in the window was a sign that said, "No Radio." At one time, such signs were common in New York — "No Radio," "No Nothing," "Everything Stolen" — but it had been a long time since I had seen one. I crossed the street to get a better look. Ah, Virginia tags. I guess they hadn't heard.

But how could they not? A wonderful thing has happened to New York. It has rolled back the years. In terms of murder, it's 1968 — the year I left for Washington — but it feels like the 1950s, which is about as far back as I remember, when crime was an inconvenience, like the weather — and not a mortal threat that circumscribed your life. New York was never all that safe — this is Gotham City, after all — but rarely has it been as dangerous as it recently was.

The change has been dramatic, virtually miraculous and — to be perfectly honest — a bit inexplicable. The mayor, Rudolph Giuliani, is a former prosecutor who just hates the bad guys. He appointed a police commissioner, William Bratton, who started to make "quality of life" arrests. No drinking on the streets — that sort of thing. Earlier, as the chief of the transit police, Bratton had arrested fare jumpers and learned something amazing: A large number of them were armed. Arrest them for jumping a subway turnstile and you get them before they commit an armed robbery.

Bratton is the police commish no more, but the cops still practice what he preached and crime remains amazingly low. Lots of people, especially the police, credit the police — and maybe they are right. Others point to dumb luck, trends in drug trafficking (fewer turf wars) and demographics — a dip in the number of young men in the population.

Still, demographics can't explain everything. Crime is down almost uniformly and even Washington, D.C., in a virtually inexplicable improvement, experienced a dip in its murder total in 1995 — and then, because it is traditional, the number of murders resumed its march upward. But the New York figures are so startling — the number of murders dropped by half over the last five years and, most significant, murder by strangers (19 percent of all homicides) is way down — that something other than demographics must be at work.

Until we are told otherwise, we can only conclude that the cops made a difference. In some respects, this runs counter to unconventional wisdom — the belief in certain circles that cops could be pretty good at catching criminals but were powerless to stop crime before it happened. This was the consensus in many scholarly journals and, as usual, there were studies to back up the thesis: Cops really don't matter all that much.

Now it seems otherwise. Bust someone for jumping a turnstile or drinking in the street and, critically, take his gun away and you're likely to get him before he commits a more serious crime. Do that often enough, and criminals stop carrying guns.

For a frequent visitor such as myself, the change in New York is not limited just to statistics. You can sense it on the street — those vanished "No Radio" signs, for instance, and the absence of car alarms going off in the night. People are no longer admonished not to walk here or go there. And Central Park, where that poor jogger was gang raped and nearly bludgeoned to death in 1989, has shaken off its reputation for violence. The city has made the most wonderful sort of progress — backward to a better time.

Where have you gone, Joe DiMaggio?

Russia Weighs Cost Of War in Chechnya

Lee Hockstader in Moscow

WITH LITTLE ceremony, the last Russian combat units have withdrawn from the separatist region of Chechnya in recent days, a final, sour symbol of Moscow's defeat in a bitter and bloody war.

Because of the chronic lack of housing that plagues Russia's armed forces, some of the departing troops have left Chechnya only to wind up shivering in crude, unheated and abandoned barracks in southern Russia or camped out in tents on frozen fields.

"We have been relocated to this place where nobody needs us," Sgt. Anatoly Kuzmenko told the newspaper Izvestia last month. "Therefore, we are waiting here in an empty field to meet our fate."

The pullout comes two years after Russian troops and armor unleashed a full-scale assault on New Year's Eve on Grozny, the Chechen capital, an attack the Kremlin announced would extinguish what was then a three-year-old bid by Chechen rebels for independence from Russia. Instead, it left the streets of the city littered with the smoldering remains of Russian armor and Russian soldiers, stoked the flames of Chechen nationalism and touched off a 20-month war that left tens of thousands of people dead, most of them civilians.

Humiliated Russian army officers have attempted lately to explain away the military debacle by contending that the mostly Muslim Chechen guerrillas were in fact professional warriors with expert training from Muslim countries. That is a shift from the official line followed throughout the war, when the separatists were described as small bands of armed criminals.

In fact, all evidence suggests that most Chechen fighters were ordinary men, mostly civilians, who took up arms to defend their homeland against the Russians, whom they saw as hostile invaders. They were highly motivated, but what training most of them had was generally in the Soviet army.

At the height of the war, more than 40,000 Russian army and Internal Affairs Ministry troops were in Chechnya. They were finally defeated in a lightning raid on Grozny by Chechen fighters last August. A peace deal, which called for the withdrawal of Russian troops, was then brokered by Alexander Lebed, acting in his brief incarnation as President Boris Yeltsin's security chief and special peace envoy to Chechnya.

Russian military officials say that all combat forces were withdrawn from Chechnya last week, leaving only a small number of logistical and transport troops. They, too, are scheduled to leave the region in the next few weeks.

"The war in Chechnya was stopped in 1996," Yeltsin said in an interview with Russian reporters last week. "I will not venture to say that the vicious circle of intolerance and hatred has been broken fully and everywhere . . . But I will consistently pursue this course" of peace.

Questions remain about whether Chechnya is legally still part of Russia; according to the peace deal, settling that issue is to be deferred until 2001. But there is no mistaking the picture in Grozny: The Kremlin's writ does not extend there.

In fact, so scant is Russia's authority that the five leading candidates running in Chechnya's presidential elections, scheduled for January 27, are all prominent separatist leaders whom Moscow regularly denounced as criminals throughout the war.

One of them, an extremely popular field commander named Shamil Basayev, led a raid on a hospital that took more than 1,000 Russian civilians hostage in the southern Russian city of Budennovsk in 1995. He is regarded by the Kremlin as the most wanted man in Russia and one of the world's leading terrorists. He could be the next president of Chechnya, and there appears to be nothing that Moscow — with neither troops nor police in Chechnya — can do to stop it.

Many Russians see the Chechens as a bunch of crazed murderers, and Basayev's candidacy is considered as outrageous as if the Unabomber or the Oklahoma City bombers were running for governor of a small Southern state. Many lawmakers in the Russian parliament — and not only hard-liners — have opposed and postponed government-backed legislation that would grant amnesty to most separatist leaders.

The costs of the war have extended beyond Russia's wounded pride or authority in Chechnya, a Connecticut-sized region of rugged mountains and broad plains 1,000 miles south of Moscow. The war also demolished whatever vestigial prestige the Russian army enjoyed as a dogged, well-trained and formidable fighting force. Even the most elite units of the armed forces time and again were beset by disorganization, poor training, low morale and atrocious logistics.

The war's price in lives also has been enormous, with estimates of the number of dead ranging from 30,000 to 80,000. Orphans and amputees, widows and widowers, lunatics and the homeless all fill the streets of Grozny, testament to the human toll of an extraordinarily brutal and indiscriminate war.

As for the economic cost of rebuilding Grozny, once a handsome city of 400,000, and the scores of smaller towns and villages shattered by Russian bombs and artillery, the estimates run into the tens of billions of dollars.

But in other ways, especially in the international arena, the war in Chechnya was not an especially costly venture for Russia.

Moscow's conduct of the war drew international condemnation and fixed in some minds the impression that Russia is not quite ready to join the ranks of what Russian leaders themselves refer to as the world's "civilized" nations. But foreign nations never regarded the matter as sufficiently serious, or susceptible to influence, to punish Russia in a way that would sting.

And while Chechnya contributed heavily to Yeltsin's deep unpopularity — a year ago his approval ratings had dipped into low single digits — it did not cripple his ability to put the war on hold for a few months and mount a dramatic comeback victory in the presidential election last summer.

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Conservationist Angers Chile

Gabriel Escobar in Renihue

THE Ugly American, the implacable foe whose environmental schemes so imperil the Chilean economy, does not make a grand entrance. Emerging unannounced from a field, wearing a green corduroy shirt and chinos, he could be one of his laborers breaking for lunch.

Slight and bearded, Douglas Tompkins seems about as threatening as Thoreau. So much has been said about his controversial conservation efforts here that one's first impression is that this American multimillionaire, the great menace to Chilean nationalists, is smaller than life. "We have been 'over-dimensionalized'," Tompkins explains, almost apologizing for not living up to his infamy.

Six years ago, Tompkins, the founder of the Esprit clothing chain, bought a large ranch in this remote corner of the world, 600 miles south of the capital, Santiago, with no other intention than to spend six months a year in an agreeable, open place.

But the sale of Esprit had provided him with deep pockets, and Tompkins soon realized that the area he had chosen provided a rare combination for a well-to-do preservationist: It had large tracts of available land, often at modest prices, and it was in the middle of one of the world's great remaining temperate rain forests.

Slowly and with little publicity, Tompkins began purchasing land. He eventually set up a foundation, the first step in what he hoped would be the creation of a national park, presented free of charge to the Chileans with the proviso that it be declared a natural sanctuary. But two years ago, when news of his plan began circulating, Tompkins and his park became the focus of a national debate so heated that a calm discussion of its merits is all but impossible.

His project, known as Pumalin Park, would extend from the Argentine border westward to the Gulf of Ancud, which empties into the Pacific Ocean — in effect dividing the country north to south. Even though he has promised to donate the park to a private foundation administered by Chileans, the fact that he was buying enough land to split the narrow country in two proved so contentious that the sale of the last parcel has been blocked since last March.

In the heat of the debate, Tompkins has been accused, improbably, of razing forests, setting up a nuclear dump, promoting abortion and even importing Israeli commandos. He has angered priests, spooked generals and been converted to Judaism by Chile's neo-Nazis.

Why is Chile rejecting a gift from Tompkins of such magnitude, a 741,000-acre project that aims to preserve one of the world's few temperate coastal rain forests, at no cost to the state?

The most common answer, especially in international environmental circles where the saga is closely followed, is that the project has stalled because powerful business groups and their allies in government fear large-scale land preservation. It is the response Tompkins favors.

"Some ministers are just torpedoing this project, and that's all there is to it," said Tompkins, 53, a lifelong adventurer who now dedicates part of his fortune to preservation.

But part of the problem, even according to some of his associates, is that Tompkins seems to court enemies in the business community. In an early and telling battle, he attacked the salmon industry, which employs 17,000 Chileans and is held up as one of the country's great success stories. Tompkins offered a reward to anyone who could prove salmon fisheries were killing sea lions, and even commissioned a private study on the matter. He is now producing a book on deforestation in Chile, a sensitive and seldom examined issue because forestry is the country's second most important industry, after mining.

Tompkins's vision clashes with the country's successful economic model and even its moral underpinnings, because his methods seemed secretive and fed the paranoia of nationalists. His idea, to Chilean eyes, is too new, too big, too strange.

"This kind of philanthropy doesn't exist in Latin America — giving without getting something in return. And that has created enormous suspicions," said Miguel Stutzin, the president of the National Committee for the Defense of Fauna and Flora, Chile's oldest and most organized environmental group.

Even ardent supporters say Tompkins undermined the project with his behavior. "He acted with Yankee innocence," one close associate said. "The principal obstacle for Douglas Tompkins has been Douglas Tompkins. His strength is his perseverance and his force of will, but that sometimes becomes arrogance. And in Latin America, arrogance is not looked upon kindly, especially if it comes from an American."

In a country where exploiting natural resources is the principal industry and where a sparse population has always been a national security issue, Tompkins represents an environmental doctrine that argues in favor of depopulating land so it can be preserved in its natural state. That not only challenges private industry and military doctrine here, but also the government and its development programs.

"I'm sure there were hundreds of options," Tompkins said. "We could have done a little of this or a little of that. But it just kind of turned out this way. We ended up being at the center of a national polemic over environment and development."

Cigarette Firm Sued In France

Anne Swardson in Paris

IN FRANCE, where cigarettes are relished as enthusiastically as cheese, the idea of blaming smoking for lung cancer is suddenly catching fire.

Last month two lung-cancer victims or their families have filed suit against the national cigarette manufacturer, accusing it of inadequately warning consumers about the relationship between lung cancer and Gauloises and Gitanes, France's most famous brands.

The suits are the first such proceedings in France, which has lagged behind the United States, Britain and Canada in recognizing the dangers of smoking and in separating smokers from non-smokers. In Paris and elsewhere in France, the hazy air of cafes is tinged with blue, people walk into elevators holding lit cigarettes, and rail stations — even when blanketed with no-smoking signs — are peopled with puffers. Even restaurants that designate no-smoking sections often place them next to smoking sections, with no barriers in between.

But France is waking up to the dangers and discomforts of smoking. Cigarette packages now must carry warnings that smoking is "gravely harmful" to health, and all cigarette advertising is prohibited. Public buildings, such as airports, are required to enforce no-smoking laws, and some offices and universities actually do.

The two lawsuits have the potential to take the restrictions much further. Each blames the lung-cancer cases on SEITA, the acronym for the company that makes Gauloises and Gitanes, a firm that until 1995 was owned by the government. "These are test cases," said Francis Caballero, the lawyer for the plaintiffs in both cases. "If we succeed, many more people will sue."

The most recent suit — filed on December 24 by the family of Suzanne Berger, a 35-year-old mother of three who died in October — contends that she was unaware of the dangers of smoking. Beginning at age 13, Berger smoked about 30 non-filtered Gauloises a day until she was diagnosed as having lung cancer in July 1995; the suit asks for $230,000 in damages.

The other lawsuit was filed on December 17 on behalf of Richard Gourlain, a 48-year-old victim of multiple cancers who was a heavy smoker of unfiltered Gauloises for 30 years. Still living, Gourlain is seeking $540,000 in damages. His wife, Lucette, decided to file the suit in hopes that greater awareness will lead to a law prohibiting sales of cigarettes to minors. Her husband, she said, has had two kinds of lung cancer along with cancer of the tongue. Because part of his tongue had to be surgically removed, she said, "He can't eat; he is starving to death."

To Philippe Boucher, director of the National Committee Against Smoking, which is sponsoring the lawsuits, the court actions are the beginning of a "revolt of the victims." And, he said, physicians, overwhelmed by new lung cancer cases, are beginning to suggest legal action to their patients.

According to figures provided by the committee, lung cancer deaths in France rose from 11,445 in 1970 to 23,237 in 1993.

Canadians Boycott U.S. Over Cuba

Howard Schneider in Toronto

PRESUMABLY Canada's college kids can party just as well along the forbidding coast of Labrador, or maybe organize a spring break in the Arctic Circle. As part of a pro-Cuba, boycott-Florida effort taking root across Canada, they're supposed to be staying away from Daytona Beach.

Backed by the Canadian Federation of Students, the country's main religious denominations and an array of other organizations, the long-term goal is to force the United States to waive enforcement of the Helms-Burton Act restricting trade with Cuba.

As it happens, Cuba is already a favored destination of thousands of Canadian snowbirds.

"I don't think most Canadians want to make enemies with Florida. I don't think anybody wants to do this," said Deborah Chapman, coordinator of the Boycott Florida Campaign.

In 1995 more than 1.7 million Canadians traveled to Florida, more than from any other country. They spent about $1.3 billion there, money the boycott campaign hopes to divert from wet T-shirt contests and Disney World.

"We know we have competition against Mickey Mouse's 50th birthday, and this is going to be an uphill battle. But what we are trying to do is present options for Canadians," Chapman said.

Unless, of course, President Clinton caves in to the demands of the boycott group — and many others — by suspending enforcement of what many Canadians regard as an odious, hegemonic, arrogant law.



A mural in Havana attacks the U.S. Helms-Burton law

PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID HARVEY

The legislation was approved after Cuban jets shot down two small civilian airplanes last year. It penalizes companies or people who invest in Cuba and thereby "traffic" — as the law says — in property that was expropriated by the Castro government.

The stated purpose of the law's authors, Sen. Jesse Helms, R-North Carolina, and Rep. Dan Burton, R-Indiana, is to strengthen the long-standing U.S. boycott of Cuba, thus encouraging the replacement of President Fidel Castro's communist government with democratic rule.

Regardless of where alleged violators are based, the law allows claims to be brought against them in U.S. courts and can prohibit their travel to the United States — measures that Canada, Mexico, the European Union and others have declared meddlesome.

Canada argues that its open-trade policy with Cuba is more effective in promoting democracy on the island than the U.S. trade embargo, and that the United States has no right to police Canadian companies.

Clinton has used a provision of the law to hold off enforcement of its most invasive portions until January, and the boycotters are urging him to extend the delay.

The Canadian Federation of Students, meanwhile, is working through its network of travel agents to promote other spots for spring break, pulling its normal promotions for Daytona Beach and exploring the possibility of discounted airfares to alternative locations, such as Cuba itself, Chapman said.

The boycott campaign also is distributing 20,000 "Cuba Si, Florida No!" postcards to its participating members — to be signed and mailed to the Florida Chamber of Commerce. A few of the postcards already have arrived, said chamber spokeswoman Fran Conaway. "We will miss our Canadian neighbors," she said, but "the tourism industry does not have any control over national law."

Robin Knight of the Florida Tourism Industry Marketing Corp. added, "They ought to be targeting North Carolina."

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Road to America

Ronald Takaki

STOWAWAY
By Carol Cordoba
Arte Publico. 284pp. $19.95

BY THE LAKE OF SLEEPING CHILDREN: The Secret Life of the Mexican Border
By Luis Alberto Urrea
Anchor. 187pp. Paperback $11

TALES OF TWO CITIES: A Persian Memoir
By Abbas Milani
Mage Publishers. 263pp.

AMONG THE WHITE MOON FACES: An Asian-American Memoir of Homelands
By Shirley Geok-lin Lim
Feminist Press. 232pp. $22.95

"WE TELL stories to bind us to a spot," writes Shirley Geok-lin Lim. One such story is that of Nicolas and Carol Cordoba, who found each other in a federal prison in New York. He had hidden in a submerged air pocket above the rudder of an oil tanker just before sailing from Colombia. After the ship arrived in New York, police searched it and discovered both Cordoba and bags of cocaine in the chamber. Cordoba insisted he was only a stowaway and not a smuggler, but he was found guilty and sentenced to 10 years in prison. There he took an English course, taught by "Miss Carol."

Much of her book is an overly dramatized account of Cordoba's dangerous trip and a tediously long report on his trial. We learn little about him. His dream was to come here, make money and return rich to Colombia. Economic success in America, Cordoba had hoped, would be a way to bind him to family and friends at home.

His English teacher was also searching for a dream. The lonely "Miss Carol" saw herself as "short," "overweight," "fifty-one years old" and the "mother of three sons in their twenties" — the same age as Nicolas. One day, Nicolas, who looked "like Eddie Murphy," told her that he loved her. The newfound love inspired Carol to reinvent herself by losing 45 pounds and purchasing "a whole new wardrobe to show off [her] new figure." She married Nicolas and followed him from prison to prison. Like a Monday-night movie for television, the story ends with them waiting to be together in Colombia after his release from prison and his deportation.

Like Nicolas Cordoba, the people in Luis Alberto Urrea's sensitively written book are also outsiders: They gaze at America not from a prison but from the garbage dumps of Tijuana. Clearly visible are luxurious condominiums and houses with swimming pools, just on the other side of the border. The politically constructed divide maps the geography of Urrea's bifurcated identity: his Mexican father and American mother, his birth in Tijuana, and his growing up in San Diego. "My father raised me to be 100 percent Mexican, often refusing to speak English to me, tirelessly patrolling the borders of my language . . . And my mother raised me to be 100 percent American: she never spoke Spanish . . . If as some have suggested lately, I am a sort of 'voice of the border,' it is because the border runs down the middle of me. I have a barbed-wire fence neatly bisecting my heart."

From his perspective, Urrea movingly retells the stories of the people in the dumps. Once a man caught him writing. "Wait a minute," he said. "You're writing about us . . . Good! You write it down . . . Because I live in the garbage, and I'll die in the garbage, and I'll be buried in the garbage. And nobody will ever know that I lived. So tell them about me."

Urrea's stories are painfully realistic. Describing how boys would stone donkeys to death for sport and how the people of the dumps were "crushingly poor," Urrea observes: "And poverty . . . ennobles no one." But the stories turn out to reveal a greater complexity and deeper humanity; one of them undermines Urrea's generalization. Eduardo had been accidentally crushed underneath a garbage truck. His horrific death knotted the people into a community: They collected money, bought Eduardo a suit, made a coffin from particle board and gave him a proper burial with candles. And thanks to Urrea, we know that Eduardo lived.

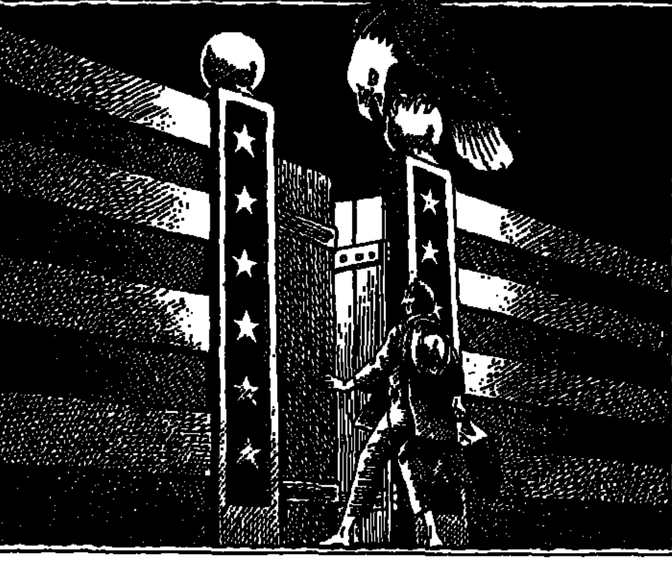


ILLUSTRATION: JEAN-FRANÇOIS ALLAUX

IN HIS Tales Of Two Cities, Abbas Milani tells how he struggled to loosen himself from the entanglements of Tehran under the Shah and then under the Ayatollah Khomeini. Milani had left his family for an education in the United States; after completing his Ph.D. at Berkeley in 1974, he returned to Tehran, where he taught at the National University. He married and thought he would lead a settled family life. But in 1977 he was charged with political crimes and was imprisoned. When freed, Milani witnessed the increasing repressiveness of the Islamic Republic as professors were forced to conform to the rigid ideas of the new order or be fired. Memories of his experiences abroad intruded: "My years in America had taught me the values of self-assertion as a cardinal element of individuality and engraved in me a respect for the sanctity of individual corporeal existence and pleasure." In 1986, Milani returned to America.

But as a settler rather than a sojourning student, Milani saw U.S. society differently. This time he noticed how intolerant and prejudiced many Americans were toward Iranians, stereotyping them as "scruggly bearded, clench-fisted zealots." As an exile, Milani also realized how fastened he still was to the Persian culture he had left in Iran. "What I once prized as the mobility of American life now seemed the source of rootlessness. The friendliness of Americans in their first encounters, their cheerful faces, now often seemed to hide lives of loneliness."

Like Milani, Shirley Geok-lin Lim came to America as a student. Her fascinating autobiography reads like a novel, with interesting stories stitched into the quilt of her life. Born into a Chinese family in the British colony of Malaysia in 1944, she was abandoned by her mother at the age of 8, beaten by her father and forced to live with her stepmother, who was the 17-year-old daughter of her father's servant. A convent school offered the lonely girl a place to moor herself as she discovered her sexuality. Bright, articulate and arrogant, she entered the university, where she intensely pursued her passions for knowledge and men. After a tryst in a hotel room with a professor, an "English man, married with two children," Lim dismissed the suggestion that it was sexual harassment. "I felt a sense of power, that unwittingly I had been able to reduce this superior man to frantic begging."

Meanwhile, Lim watched Malaysia secure its independence from British rule in 1957. But this freedom unleashed ethnic separatism and murderous anti-Chinese riots. For her, Malaysian ascendancy meant "one group's empowerment" leading to "another's oppression." Her hope for the creation of a multicultural society dashed, she was beckoned to America by a Fulbright fellowship.

However, Lim quickly discovered that it was not the promised land, at least not for Asians. She was perceived as a "foreigner" simply because she did not look like an "American."

Lim's stay here became permanent with her marriage to an American, the birth of a child and a university appointment. But she remained tethered to childhood memories of Malaysia — her father's grave overlooking green paddy fields and her family knitted together through jealousies and hardships. Like Milani, however, Lim experienced an ambivalence that reflected a larger cultural conflict between being an individual and belonging to a community. "What had preserved me in Malaysia, the struggle for an individual self against the cannibalism of familial, ethnic, and communual law, was exactly what was pickling me in isolation in the United States."

Though our four storytellers take us down different paths, they lead us to ponder a common question: What are "the mystic chords of memory" that bind Americans to the United States? Joining what Walt Whitman called the "varied carols" of America, they share stories that rebel against the ethnocentricisms that strap the expansiveness of the human spirit. They urge us to reach for the sometimes conflicted but always enriching multiplicity contained within each of our selves and to imagine a world without borders.

The Makings of a Model Citizen

Roberto Suro

THE NEW SECOND GENERATION
Edited by Alejandro Portes Russell
Sage Foundation. 246pp. $45
Paperback $19.95

IMMIGRANT AMERICA: A Portrait (second edition)
By Alejandro Portes and Ruben G. Rumbaut
University of California Press.
421pp. $40 Paperback $14.95

IN 1974 the commissioner of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, Leonard F. Chapman, a growling former Marine general, promised to open up a million good jobs for American citizens if Congress would let him seal the border and carry out mass deportations of illegal immigrants. Twenty years later in California, Governor Pete Wilson promised voters that if the state didn't have to spend any money on illegal immigrants it could put a computer on every desk in every public school.

The public-policy debate on immigration has shifted from employment to social services, from anxieties about losing jobs to concerns that public spending on immigrants deprives Americans of their due. And now these worries encompass all immigrants, legal and illegal, as was evident last summer when Congress passed a law to keep all the foreign-born, including naturalized U.S. citizens in some cases, from getting welfare.

This shift reflects changes in an immigrant population that has grown not only much larger but also more permanent and more complete. The newcomers are no longer just a first-generation vanguard of young adults looking for jobs. Now there is also a second generation. These children of immigrants, who were either born in the United States or came at a young age, need schooling, health care and much else. Their future will reveal whether the United States still has the magic to make immigrants a source of strength.

Alejandro Portes, chair of the sociology department at the Johns Hopkins University, was among the first important scholars of immigration to recognize that the children of the foreign-born represent a distinct and crucial subject matter. He helped marshal the funding and the collaborators for a series of major studies that are reported in The New Second Generation, a collection of essays.

Whether they are examining the lives of rich Cubans in Miami or poor Mexicans in San Diego, the authors conclude that immigrant youths are all learning English and adapting to their new land. But what kind of Americans will they become? Sheer numbers alone ensure that the outcome will have a huge impact on the nation. Sometime in the late 1990s the size of this second generation will surpass the 28-million mark set by the children of European immigrants in the 1940s. Even after conducting surveys, case studies and statistical analyses of all sorts, the authors are cautious about predicting a fate for the second generation because every piece of research uncovers the potential for diverse and unpredictable results.

The essays in The New Second Generation are written more colloquially than papers for an academic journal, but they are nonetheless a little heavy on sociological jargon, which could easily have been explained to make the volume more accessible. In addition, this book primarily reports on research, and readers looking for bold judgments and prescriptions will come away frustrated.

One broad conclusion, however, does emerge clearly from these studies: The future of the second generation will be determined by what they encounter in the U.S. as much as, if not more so, by the skills and cultures that the first generation brought from abroad. As Ruben G. Rumbaut, a sociologist at Michigan State University, says at the conclusion of an essay on the difficulty of becoming an adult and becoming an American at the same time, "in the final analysis, it is the crucible without that shapes the crucible within."

The interplay between the character of the newcomer and the context of the new land gets much broader treatment in Immigrant America: A Portrait. This classic work by Portes and Rumbaut, first published in 1990, has been updated and expanded in a new edition.

Viewing the current era of immigration as a highly varied process rather than an event, the authors examine the major elements of that process, such as occupational adaptation and language acquisition. A theoretical framework and an abundance of up-to-date statistical material are provided for each topic. The writing is professorial, but the book provides an invaluable overview.

Portes and Rumbaut openly proclaim their assessment that "overall immigration has been and will continue to be positive for the country," and sometimes they seem to be at pains to make that case. Immigrant America's major weakness lies in a tendency to overemphasize the significance of the Indian physicians, Korean businessmen and others arriving with more education than the U.S. average. Despite their considerable contributions, these newcomers are substantially outnumbered by the Cambodian refugees, the Mexican laborers and others who arrived with fewer skills than the native-born. For better or worse, the public-policy challenges are created by those on the low end.

The only real disappointment in this second version of Immigrant America is a new concluding chapter that offers analysis and suggestions on those policy challenges. Neither of the authors has much background in this area, and compared to the rest of the book this chapter is thinly researched and loosely argued. After so masterfully developing the complexity of this subject, it is a shame that they end the new edition on a simplistic note.

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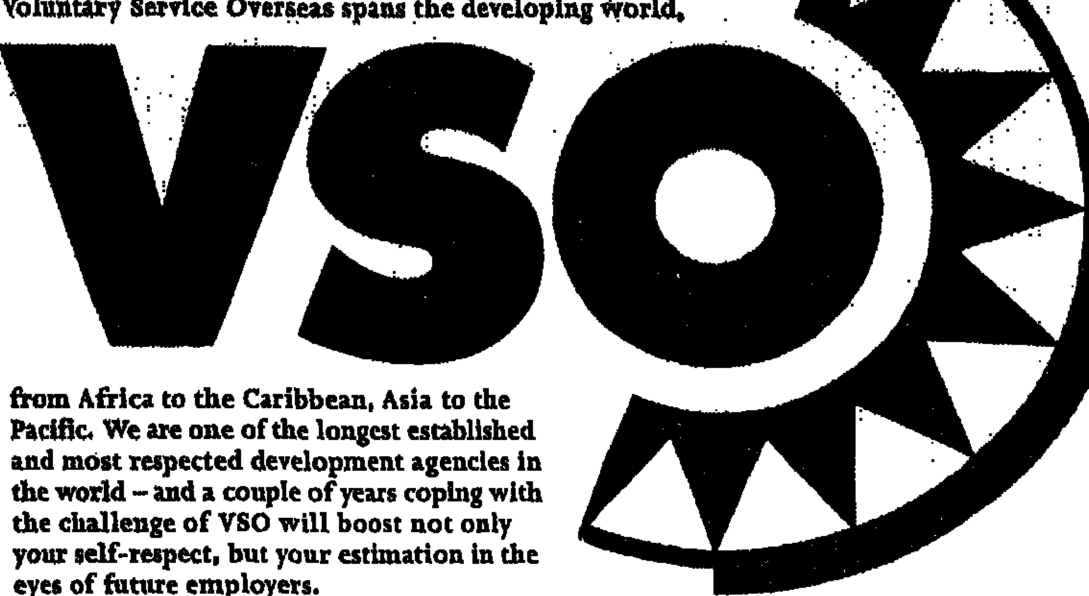
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Danger grips the helping hands

Peter Beaumont looks at the difficulties facing the Red Cross after the killings in Chechenia



Cross purposes . . . in some conflicts the work of aid agencies has made mass ethnic cleansing easier

WE WERE eating supper when the shooting started; eight aid workers and a journalist crammed into the squalor of a freezing, two-room flat on the outskirts of the Bosnian town of Zenica, at Christmas in 1993. The gunfire — it was quickly obvious — was centred on a building 100 metres down the hill from where we were staying, an apartment occupied by a French charity. As the shooting stopped, we scrambled out and half tumbled down a dirt bank to reach the French, whose torch beams we could see cutting through the night. Dazed but unhurt, a French doctor was standing in the road. His guard, he told us breathlessly, had surprised a group of armed men trying to steal their car, which — in the exchange of fire that followed — had rolled off down the hill, ploughing through gardens as it went. He shrugged a Gallic shrug and returned to searching for his car.

The following day I recounted this story to Larry Hollingworth, the chief of operations of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), in his office in the UN compound in Zenica's town centre. He shook his head and tut-tutted at the folly of charities living and working on their own, away from the protection of the UN military forces.

His words came back to haunt me three weeks later. Early in January 1994, three British drivers with the Overseas Development Administration (ODA) — based in his depot — were driving their white-painted Land Rover through the town. As they passed through the dark streets, they were halted by a VW Golf, whose occupants, wearing the beards and clothing of the mojahedin, hijacked the British workers. Simon King, David Court and Paul Goodall were informed in broken English that they were being taken hostage to trade for some captured friends. Instead, they were driven to the riverside, forced to their knees and shot from behind. Goodall died instantly. King and Court, both injured, plunged into the freezing river and struggled to the other side.

The murder of Paul Goodall raised many questions about the future of international aid. Was it possible for aid workers to be properly neutral in increasingly complex, politicised conflicts? Was their presence in danger of exacerbating the very problems they were attempting to alleviate? And, moreover, what kind of person, who on earth, would continue to accept the risks of doing voluntary work in such volatile areas?

These questions, and the words of Hollingworth, have been revived again following last month's murder of six Red Cross workers — Ingebjoerg Foss, Gunnhild Myklebust, Hans Elkerbout, Fernanda Calado, Sheryl Thayer and Nancy Malloy — in their beds at the hospital at Novye Atagi, Chechenia. It was the worst atrocity in the Red Cross's 133-year history, an event that is more than a sum of the individual tragedies. It is a harrowing warning of the increasing dangers to aid workers worldwide. Dangers that the Chechen conflict — which is supposed to be over — has revealed all too clearly: seldom before have humanitarian and care workers been so systematically targeted for attack.

The grisly pattern began when Russian aircraft bombed the hospital in the Chechen town of Shali in the early days of the war. Russian troops subsequently looted and vandalised Grozny's hospitals and used them as barracks; then 200 people were murdered when the Chechen rebel leader Shamil Basayev seized the hospital in the Russian town of Budyonnovsk. (He is now running for the Chechen presidency.) In Grozny last summer, an entire team of surgeons was killed when their hospital was shelled to pieces around them as they operated. At one point, a group of Russian special forces troops, trapped by separatist fighters, seized a hospital and threatened to kill the patients unless they were given safe passage.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) knew it was not immune. It had been threatened, robbed and obstructed. Workers had been kidnapped — most recently on the eve of last month's killing — but their release was always successfully negotiated. They were vulnerable and visible, crisscrossing the Chechen roads in their gleaming white Toyotas, unarmed, without flak jackets or helmets. They relied on persuasion to get past obstructive soldiers and fighters, on walkie-talkies and satphones for mutual reassurance and location reporting, and most of all on the residual power of the Red Cross symbol.

But even when it was becoming clear how little respect the cross really commanded, no one expected the cold-blooded murder of sleeping nurses in the dead of night. The Red Cross set up a hospital in Novye Atagi in August, in the aftermath of the last great battle for Grozny, because the village had remained eerily neutral throughout the two-year conflict: neither Russian troops nor organised detachments of Chechen rebels were based there and the community saw no serious fighting or bombardment. With the neighbouring community of Stary Atagi, it became the venue for peace talks that led to the end of open warfare and the withdrawal of Russian forces.

There were tensions. Chris Giannon, medical co-ordinator for the ICRC in the North Caucasus, who supervised the setting up of the hospital, says there had been complaints by a small group of radical Islamists among Chechenia's relatively undogmatic Muslims about the use of the cross symbol, and some had been taken down.

There had been thefts of supplies, visits to the premises by rebel leaders late at night to see friends, and forceful demands that friends or relatives be given Red Cross jobs. Yet Giannon was sceptical that such mundane problems, typical of war zones, could have led to such a cold, ruthlessly executed set of killings.

"Nobody ever came to assassinate in such a cowardly fashion just because you didn't hire somebody," Giannon said on the phone from the Red Cross's North Caucasus base in Nalchik. "It was four o'clock in the morning. The men wore masks or hoods over their heads and they went about very systematically killing people. This was the work of professional cowards, and when one of our guards managed to start firing a few shots, they stopped their killing and ran away. They did not want to leave anybody behind. For me, this is not criminal but political."

THOSE who survived did so because they had locked the doors to their rooms. One door was broken down by the attackers, and the victim was found dead just inside: the others were killed in their beds. One survivor, Norwegian doctor Tobias Bredlend, almost unable to speak from the hideousness of what he had experienced, said he had been woken up by the sound of someone trying to open his door.

"My first thought was that I was being kidnapped," he said. "But then the person at the door gave up and I heard footsteps disappearing down the hall. After that I heard some muffled sounds and screams. I thought my colleagues were being beaten or dragged out of their beds.

"I never heard shots and didn't understand people were being killed until I went out into the hall." He saw one of the attackers, masked and carrying a gun with a silencer attached. Most sinister of all, none of the killers uttered a word during an attack that lasted no more than three minutes.

The politics behind the massacre worries the ICRC less than the fact that their workers, once seen by combatants as untouchable, were chosen to send a message to Russia and Chechenia's Byzantine factions — depriving hundreds of thousands of people of humanitarian aid as winter descends on the ruins.

"The victim is the civilian population, which no longer has the full panoply of ICRC activities to help it. The victim is humanitarian work in general, the victim is humanity, the victim is peace — and then the victims happen to be our six colleagues," says Giannon.

What are the implications of this for the future of aid? The nineties, as Professor Adam Roberts of Oxford University argues in Humanitarian Action In War, has been a decade in which humanitarian action as a response to regional conflict has been tried as never before. It has also been the decade in which aid efforts have failed as never before.

The international community's record is beginning to look a very shaky one. Somalia ended with a humiliating retreat; in Bosnia, the UN's insistence on humanitarian aid above all was shattered by the fall of Srebrenica. In Rwanda, Liberia and now Chechenia, Roberts argues, they have fared little better.

And in this muddle the aid worker has become more vulnerable. This has been due, in part, to the fact that the military forces that have supported the often forced delivery of humanitarian aid in the past decade — the West's "tough love" — have undermined the agencies' position of neutrality, particularly in the eyes of those who also associate the UN blue helmet with "aggression" and Western meddling in the Gulf. The reputation of aid agencies and the international community has also suffered on another front: in the growing perception that too often organisations such as the Red Cross and the UN have become unwilling accomplices of this decade's new-found thirst for genocide and ethnic cleansing. This is the horrible paradox that faces the aid agencies. They are torn between compassion, conscience and a sense of duty on one side, and the knowledge that, in wars as diverse as Bosnia and Rwanda, their food and medicine and protective presence has made the work of mass ethnic cleansing easier.

But the alternative is no less ghastly. It is the consequence of inaction. It is a scene from hell described by Hollingworth: the horror of Srebrenica.

"Towards the end of the town," Hollingworth wrote in his memoir of the Bosnian war, "was a group of the most recent arrivals. They were on the right-hand side of the road. There were seven of them, three generations. They had no crate. The men were sitting on the icy floor, the women on the small bundles containing everything they possessed. The children were on the knees of the two men, father and grandfather, eating and passing something between them. They were picking at it, sucking on it, probing it: in the dark I could not see what it was. I moved in and greeted them, then I saw what the children were sharing. It was a horse's hoof."

"I wanted to be sick. I wanted to cry. But I was so stunned I did neither . . . I wanted to drag the people who were responsible from their offices, from their trenches, to stand and share this scene with me.

"As I walked back, I tried to identify where I fitted in. We shared some of this hardship. We were cold. In truth, I was hungry. But we were not them. We had good clothing, good boots. We had muscle, fat and vitamins, hope — a ticket home. This is how and why we coped."

Hollingworth was in a Manchester hotel last month, on a lightning visit home from the camps he is now running for the UNHCR in Dagestan. There he is doing what he knows best, caring for 34,500 refugees — mainly old men, women and children displaced from Chechenia by the war.

THE MAN who bullied, cajoled and hectored the combatants of the Bosnian war, and an often unlistening world, has plunged himself into picking up the human pieces of another nasty, muddled, stupid little war.

After Bosnia, Hollingworth has few illusions about the business he is in. "Aid has become politicised. It is now difficult for even the small agencies to keep out of it. And hard questions are not being addressed. The debate comes down to two questions. Have we the right and duty to go in? Have we the right and duty not to? "One of the problems is the aid community itself. A lot of people are employed in the aid business. Chasing international crises has become a career in the same way that chasing car accidents has become a career choice for lawyers."

But weighed against this scepticism, Hollingworth is convinced of the absolute imperative of action to alleviate those suffering through war and famine. "I think the truth is that you also have to ask yourself when you see the first signs of a humanitarian crisis in the making: can you hold off? Even if one could personally make that judgment, we are not given the choice. The media does not allow it. And in that respect we are caught between two stools. If we don't do something, we are asked why not? If we do something, we are criticised for feeding the combatants as well as the civilian victims." Hollingworth is also acutely aware of the way in which aid workers such as his colleagues in the Red Cross in Chechenia have become easy targets for extremists keen to score quick points.

"For the average person in the countries we are in, the aid worker has a huge amount of respect. But for the psychopaths and criminal dross thrown up in conflicts like Somalia and Chechenia, he is also an easy target. These people don't see him as the bright young guy who has taken six months leave of absence from his hospital to help those less fortunate than himself. They see him as a target. As easy publicity. They made their point last week in Chechenia. They told us to get out." — *The Observer*



Singobile Mabhena receives the staff of authority from Zimbabwe's minister of local government, John Nkomo, as she succeeds her father as chief of the Nswazi people PHOTOGRAPH: ANDREW MELDRUM

African warriors hail woman chief

Andrew Meldrum in Matandele, Zimbabwe

SURROUNDED by government ministers and tribal chiefs, Sinqobile Mabhena appears a model of female subservience as she bows her head and modestly lowers her eyes. But this demure 23-year-old has rocked Zimbabwe's traditional culture by becoming one of the first women to take on the powerful mantle of tribal chief.

"I know many people are opposed to me becoming chief because I am a woman," said Ms Mabhena. "I will prove to them that I can work as much as a man. Being a woman doesn't mean you are disabled."

Ms Mabhena was installed last month as chief of the estimated 100,000 people of the Nswazi communal area in southern Zimbabwe. The ceremony featured dashing Ndebele warriors in leopard skin loincloths, old women in bone necklaces intoning the spirits of their ancestors, several choirs, drumming and, of course, a feast of food.

"I bring your community a Christmas present, your new chief, Sinqobile Mabhena," said Zimbabwe's minister for local government, John Nkomo, to ululations and cheers.

"Chief Howard Mabhena died in 1993 and he had no son to succeed him. It therefore fell upon his eldest daughter, Sinqobile, to succeed him and she has taken up her chieftainship responsibilities with humility," he said.

He explained that Ms Mabhena's investiture had been delayed by more than a year because of objections. "The government held lengthy discussions and the Nswazi people insisted they would rather have Sinqobile than a male chief who would not have been appointed by them. All's well that ends well."

A chief's main responsibilities are to preside over hearings to settle family disputes and matters of property. "I want to look at all sides in any dispute and to be fair," said Ms Mabhena. "I don't want to only take the woman's side or to just take the man's side."

As well-wishers crowded round to congratulate Ms Mabhena, she wiped tears from her eyes. "I just thought about this whole thing, the history, my father, the future, the responsibility, everything," she said.

Ms Mabhena is a combination of the old Africa and the new. During the week she lives in Bulawayo, where she is studying to be a primary schoolteacher. She wears short skirts, high heels and has a boyfriend, who is a schoolteacher. At weekends she goes back to her family's rural home where she meets in council with the Mabhena clan's elders.

Five other chiefs witnessed the event, as well as the governor of Matabeleland South province and the local MP. Her investiture, however, does not bring an end to the controversy. The ceremony was boycotted by several chiefs and political figures, and the attendance of 800 was smaller than the 2,000 that had been anticipated.

But Ms Mabhena's grandmother, Gogo Flora Masuku, is outspokenly in favour. "I am very, very happy to see a female chief. Women must stand up for their rights and advance their position. Women fought to end Rhodesia. We now have female cabinet ministers and airplane pilots. Why not chiefs? Is the queen of Britain a man? Women can be leaders."

Letter from Antarctica Clive Evans

Life in the freezer

UNTIL relatively recently any exploration of the deep south required a journey by sea. Most of the early Antarctic explorers no doubt dreaded the destructive power of the southern oceans as much as they did the extreme environment of the Antarctic itself.

For the modern-day visitor, conjure up not waves of unimaginable height pounding the very life out of our vessel as we sail south, nor piercingly cold winds that neither flesh nor fibre can resist as we slog by foot over the continent. Picture instead the relatively mild discomfort of military air transport, which these days can deliver its cargo to within a few metres of any specified location on the globe.

My seven-hour flight south from New Zealand was aboard an ageing Hercules. Our mission was to collect fish from different localities around Ross Island and to compare the impacts of pollutants, such as diesel fuel, on their health. Generally speaking, Antarctica is a pristine environment but the effects of human activities are hard to contain.

Probably the worst affected place is Winter Quarters Bay, the site of the old dump at McMurdo station. In the past, most Antarctic junk was simply abandoned on the ice, which duly thawed and sent its cargo of rubbish to the bottom of the ocean. This included fuel drums, broken machinery and much of the everyday rubbish generated by a small town whose population reached 1,000 in the summer months. Nowadays environmental concerns are taken seriously but the legacy of our earlier, cavalier attitude remains.

We needed to collect samples for scientific analysis. That is to say we need to indulge in a spot of fishing. To achieve this in some comfort, we placed a heated hut over a hole drilled in the ice and then lowered our lines. We sampled our fish as we went and kept up to schedule so that by the end of the week we were able to take advantage of a helicopter flight from Scott Base to Cape Crozier.

Of all the southern explorations there is one that truly deserves its reputation as the worst journey in the world. It involved a journey by sledge for three of Captain Robert Scott's 1910 Terra Nova team, around Ross Island from their base camp at Cape Evans to an emperor penguin rookery on Cape Crozier. They wanted to collect eggs to provide evidence about the evolutionary origin of birds. The trip had to be undertaken in the freezing darkness of winter because of the mating habits of the emperor penguin.

It soon became a nightmare. Temperatures plummeted to -60C and winds reached hurricane force. Later, the three men had the unbelievable misfortune of losing their tent to the wind, only to find it again in an undamaged state. Without a tent they probably would never have made it back alive to Cape Evans, but they did, and with three treasured emperor penguin eggs in their possession. The eggs were ultimately of little scientific relevance. By 1934, when they had finally been subjected to detailed analysis, the great evolutionary debate had passed them by. It must have broken the heart of Apsley Cherry-Garrard, the sole survivor, who had delivered the eggs faithfully to the British Museum 21 years earlier.

Our helicopter dropped us off at a vantage point on Cape Crozier, from where I could see clusters of emperors milling at the edge of the ice. Suddenly streams of penguins shot out of the water to flee a pod of killer whales. The colony seemed highly agitated as the killers idly cruised the ice edge, but this time the water didn't turn red.

We enjoyed a picnic lunch overlooking the emperors and bathed in sunny -6C weather before radioing in the Iroquois to collect us. On the return journey we flew over Scott Base and landed on the sea ice just past Cape Evans. Some Weddell seals and a few emperors had taken advantage of the cracks in the sea ice to come on to aqua firma. Ever curious, the penguins waddled their way towards us, coming to within an arm's reach to pose for photos.

I drank my afternoon tea and reflected on the enormity of what I had just done. I had essentially completed the worst journey in the world, but I had done it in a matter of hours. This is not to say that the life of the modern-day Antarctic visitor is without its own challenges: the powdered milk on my tea left little lumps that had to be removed, one by one, with a spoon.

Notes & Queries Joseph Harker

WHEN I was stung by nettles as a child, there were always dock leaves nearby. What's happened to them?

OBVIOUSLY, lots of people have been stung. — *Peter Meyrick, Tocloucau, France*

THEY are all growing on my allotment. — *Terence Hall, Pendlebury, Manchester*

CAN ANYONE restore my faith by citing a few idols of the 20th century who are still above reproach?

I SUBMIT that Arthur Scargill is such an idol. Denigrated by the media, the farrago of slurs and allegations about his character, his personal life, his financial probity and his devotion to the National Union of Mineworkers have all been disproved. Although he could probably have been elected a Labour MP in a mining constituency for life, his fidelity to socialism has overridden that comfortable option. — *R L Clifford, Sudbury, Suffolk*

A GOOGOL is 10^{100} (1 followed by 100 zeros). Can there possibly be a googol of anything in the universe?

PHYSICIST David Bohm, in Wholeness And The Implicate Order, suggests that there may be 10[illegible] universes existing simultaneously — or maybe more. So we may be in only one of a googol of universes. — *Christopher Lee, Shrawley, Worcester*

IF WE take a conservative estimate based on quasar observations that the universe has a diameter of 13 billion light years and then we apply one of the smallest units of measure, the Angstrom, we come up with the fascinating result that the volume of the observable universe equals 2.4 million google cubic Angstroms. — *Andy Parkin, Leeds*

IN THE Jerome K Jerome novel Two Men On The Bummel, a reference is made to Tom and Jerryism. Since this predates the cartoon characters, who are or were Tom and Jerry?

TOM AND JERRY were characters created by Pierce Egan (1772-1849) in his Life In London; Or The Day And Night Scenes Of Jerry Hawthorne And His Elegant Friend Corinthian Tom, Accompanied By Bob Logic (1820-1).

This was a racy account of the drunken, behaviour of Regency bucks and gave rise to the terms "Tom-and-Jerrying" (1828) for loutish behaviour. In 1862 an American guide to alcoholic drinks gave a recipe for a spicy punch called "Tom-and-Jerry". In Britain, a low beer-house was called a "Tom-and-Jerry" (1865).

The names became inseparably linked, so when a tom-cat was made the protagonist of a cartoon series, it was inevitable that his mouse antagonist would be called Jerry. — *Dermod Quirke, Halifax, W Yorkshire*

SINCE the original book was Three Men On The Bummel, was this a mistake on the part of the enquirer or has literature fallen victim to the modern craze of downsizing? Are we to eagerly await the publication of A Gentlemen Of Verona, Wuthering Height, A Tale Of One City and The Only Child Karamazov? — *D W Cameron, Birchencliffe, Huddersfield*

Any answers?

I HAVE heard that if a drop of whisky is put on a scorpion's back it will sting itself to death. Is this true and why? — *Gerard Mackay, Nesscliffe, Shropshire*

WHAT is the minimum size for Noah's Ark on the basis of two of every known species and enough food for six weeks (assuming the animals wouldn't eat each other)? — *Colin Matthews, London*

I HAVE a treasured newspaper photograph about 10 years old. What can I do to stop it deteriorating? — *Val Mainwood, Wivenhoe, Essex*

Answers should be e-mailed to weekly@guardian.co.uk, faxed to 0171/44171-242-0985, or posted to The Guardian Weekly, 75 Farringdon Road, London EC1M 3HQ

Japan isn't working any more

The land of the sinking yen is in economic crisis. **Keith Harper** in Tokyo asks what's going wrong

JAPAN'S emergence as an economic superpower, second only to the United States, had been — until the 1990s — one of this century's most dramatic changes in the global pecking order.

But as the yen soared to new heights against the dollar at the start of this decade, the cracks in Japan's industrial, political and financial structures began to emerge. Japanese products, which in the 1970s and 1980s were the best made and most price competitive in the world, lost their allure. Like the multinationals in Europe and North America, the great trading houses were forced to move production offshore to their more competitive neighbours in the Pacific Basin, Britain and North America.

With the hollowing out of the industrial base came a financial implosion. The supervision and management of Japanese banks was shown to be deeply flawed, leading to a loss of confidence, which made the Nikkei, the star stock market index of the 1980s, a laggard that almost totally missed out on the raging bull market that has taken New York and the European bourses to the highest levels in their history.

The completion of the Uruguay trade round — designed to open Japanese markets — and the decision by the seven strongest economic powers to devalue the yen against the dollar brought about long-awaited relief.

There was a belief that Japan could halt the economic decline, and the lack of initiative and dynamism that kept it in recession during much of the present decade. At the start of 1996 it looked as if the sleeping giant would be aroused from its slumber. The International Monetary Fund, perhaps more in hope than expectation, predicted that recovery would gain momentum after the protracted downturn. The deflationary forces that had crushed asset prices and optimism were in retreat.

For a few months the West breathed again: growth in Japan would counteract the slowdowns expected in the US after a prolonged expansion and in Europe as it adjusted to monetary union.

However, there is growing evidence that a longer-term cultural, political and economic malaise may see Japan left behind by its flourishing Pacific neighbours.

Consumer spending, which accounts for 60 per cent of the economy, dropped last November by 4.6 per cent — one of the biggest monthly falls on record. Government officials, wishing to make light of the drop, cite the adverse impact of a cool summer and an outbreak of food poisoning on retail and restaurant sales. But consumers have kept their wallets shut for years.

While Japan's most important multinationals have shown signs of recovery, the domestic economy is stuck. Over the past quarter, it has grown by 0.1 per cent. This year, the Nomura research institute estimates, Japan's GDP will improve by little more than 1 per cent.

Enter Professor Hiroshi Takeuchi, chairman of Japan's long-term credit bank research institute and a top government adviser. He is leading a task group to investigate ways of encouraging tourism on a grand scale, bringing in not just the Koreans and Taiwanese, but Americans and Europeans and, although it almost hurts him to say it of Japan's natural enemy, the Chinese.

To launch the initiative, Prof Takeuchi intends to tap the latent talent of thousands of Japanese wives who have toured overseas with their husbands. They will take charge of a network of new information centres in every town and city.

As Prof Takeuchi contemplates this upheaval in Japanese culture, he also ponders what life could be like if his country does not take this leap into the unknown. The yen continues to float against the dollar and in the long term, he believes, the rate will decline to 150 or even more. Into this uncertain pot, he stirs the drift away from Japanese factories to parts of Asia where labour is cheaper — and to Britain. Some 10 per cent of Japan's production is now outside the country and the gap is widening.

All this could set the stage for a long-awaited showdown between opposing forces in the political establishment. Since his re-election, the prime minister, Ryutaro Hashimoto has undertaken a broad reform of Japan's heavily regulated economy. A successful deregulation programme that began last month, targeting 13 different areas, may lead to new growth and produce lower prices for both consumers and companies.

But it will be tough to persuade the bureaucrats to dismantle the well-tried system of shielded domestic markets, inflated prices at home and strong exports. If the civil servants hold sway, the protective planning that for so long has dominated Japan's domestic economy could lead to its long-term decline.

Mr Hashimoto has to act. Unless he takes a knife to Japan's excessive living and wage costs, consumer demand will lag and firms will search for cheaper accommodation abroad.

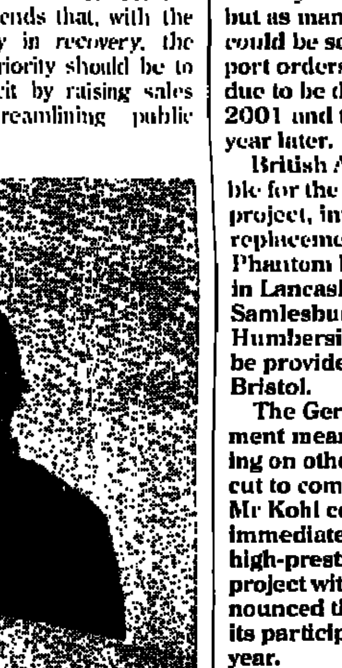
But it is not all gloom. Mr Hashimoto is showing signs of hitting back at Japan's conformist protectionism. Faced with official forecasts that, without reform, the country will be lucky to achieve long-term growth of 1.75 per cent, he has announced a shakeup of the financial markets.

A decision to break up the Nippon Telegraph and Telephone Corporation to spur competition is in the offing, and the cabinet is drawing up a much broader package to revitalise wholesale, retail, housing and transportation markets in the new year.

It will be a slow process, because the Japanese are a conservative people, but nothing else has worked. The days of Japan's double-digit growth are gone. Japan's twin policy of financial reform and deregulation and the opening of its frontiers to streams of visitors may work. But Japan will have to countenance a swifter change than it has so far been ready to concede; otherwise, the more confident tigers will take over her lair.

Charlotte Denny adds: Japan needs a diet of spending cuts and tax increases to tackle its bloated public sector deficit, according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the leading think-tank of the industrialised countries.

In its annual report on the Japanese economy, released last week the OECD recommends that, with the economy finally in recovery, the government's priority should be to reduce its deficit by raising sales taxes and streamlining public spending.



Trouble ahead: Will these youngsters have to join the ranks of the unemployed? PHOTO: BERNARD ANNEBICQUE

Bonn deal boost for Eurofighter

Ian Traynor in Bonn

THE *German government* has reached a breakthrough agreement on funding the $70 billion Eurofighter project that should safeguard up to 100,000 jobs in Britain. The deal comes after months of in-fighting, which had threatened to paralyse the four-country scheme.

The Bonn cabinet, according to reports here last Sunday, has cleared the major hurdle holding up the Eurofighter, by agreeing that the defence and finance ministries will, over four years, jointly fill an $1.3 billion funding shortfall.

With Britain committed to buying 232 of the new fighter aircraft, Germany is expected to announce it will purchase 180. The agreement ends months of uncertainty that has held up the signing of a memorandum of understanding between Britain, Germany, Italy and Spain.

Whitehall estimates the project will create 16,000 jobs directly and 84,000 indirectly, but as many as 300,000 jobs could be secured owing to export orders. The first aircraft is due to be delivered to the RAF in 2001 and to go into service a year later.

British Aerospace, responsible for the British end of the project, intends constructing the replacement for the ageing Phantom bomber at two plants in Lancashire, Wharton and Samlesbury, and at Brough, Humberside. Engines would be provided by Rolls-Royce in Bristol.

The German cabinet agreement means that defence spending on other areas will need to be cut to compensate. Last month, Mr Kohl conceded there was no immediate money available for a high-prestige joint spy satellite project with France, and announced that Bonn was delaying its participation by at least a year.

The decision did little to bolster Franco-German relations, since Mr Kohl and the French president, Jacques Chirac, had announced the project amid much fanfare exactly a year earlier.

IMF pulls plug on Mozambique

Joseph Hanlon

PEACE HAS not brought prosperity to Mozambique. Four years after the end of the civil war, the poorest country in the world is growing poorer.

The reason is that the International Monetary Fund has ruled that annual inflation must be brought below 15 per cent before there can be significant post-war reconstruction. This policy is called "stabilisation", but the former finance minister, Magid Osman, warns: "Putting stabilisation first makes instability more likely."

Delaying reconstruction is the opposite of the successful policies of Europe and Asia in the 1940s, after the second world war. But the IMF is taking a narrowly monetarist line, arguing that the already minimal level of demand must be further reduced to bring down inflation before investment can be allowed to increase supply.

Mozambique was a cold war battlefield: the decade-long conflict killed a million people and caused damage in excess of $25.3 billion. The war ended with a peace accord in 1992 and highly praised multi-party elections in October 1994.

Donors want to help Mozambique rebuild, but the IMF has insisted that donors spend $190 million less this year than in 1994 on reconstruction, which it regards as inflationary.

Fears are growing that people will see no gains from peace and democracy. "If the government does not renegotiate its accord with the IMF, peace is threatened," warns Pedro Chibala, an official of Sintract, the independent drivers' union.

Last year there was good rainfall and a record maize crop. The 1.7 million returned refugees look forward to earning their first big cash surplus. But piles of maize remain unsold: thousands of tons will rot.

Roads remain closed because the IMF has forced the government, donor nations and the World Bank to cut back on road repairs.

The IMF policy has now been in force for more than five years, but is a manifest failure, even in the organisation's own terms. In the late 1980s, at the height of the war, Mozambique imposed its own modified adjustment policy, which led to significant growth and falling inflation. By 1991, GNP per capita had risen to $115 and inflation had fallen to 21 per cent.

That year the IMF imposed its stabilisation policy. Each year since then, GNP per capita has fallen. Mozambique now has a per capita GNP of $100, the lowest in the world, according to the UN's 1996 Human Development Report. Industrial production rose in the late 1980s — during the war — but has fallen each year since stabilisation was imposed and is now half of the 1990 level.

The Catholic Bishop of Nampula, Dom Manuel Vieira Pinto, says that "the IMF must stop looking only at its computers and look at real people in Mozambique". And he asks: "Will this all end violently?"

FOREIGN EXCHANGES

	Sterling rates January 6	Sterling rates December 16
Australia	2.1360-2.1386	2.0951-2.0977
Austria	18.53-18.55	18.15-18.17
Belgium	54.25-54.33	53.18-53.26
Canada	2.3082-2.3104	2.2688-2.2710
Denmark	10.05-10.07	9.87-9.88
France	8.90-8.91	8.71-8.71
Germany	2.6351-2.6377	2.5802-2.5829
Hong Kong	13.02-13.03	12.85-12.86
Ireland	1.0127-1.0146	0.9993-1.0008
Italy	2.591-2.593	2.541-2.545
Japan	194.88-195.11	189.39-189.67
Netherlands	2.9549-2.9601	2.8955-2.8989
New Zealand	2.3771-2.3802	2.3731-2.3769
Norway	10.88-10.89	10.76-10.77
Portugal	264.33-264.39	260.15-260.46
Spain	221.47-221.77	217.06-217.27
Sweden	11.70-11.72	11.33-11.35
Switzerland	2.2821-2.2850	2.2038-2.2068
USA	1.6842-1.6852	1.6613-1.6624
ECU	1.3582-1.3596	1.3376-1.3391

FTSE100 Share Index up 112.7 at 4106.6. FTSE 250 Index up 146.2 at 4517.4. Gold down $0.80 at $358.75.

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Saving grace . . . Lynn Redgrave provides the love of a good woman for Geoffrey Rush in Shine

Brilliantissimo

CINEMA
Derek Malcolm

"*AT LAST*, a great film," Steven Spielberg is supposed to have exclaimed on seeing Scott Hicks's **Shine** at the Sundance Festival. I prefer the only slightly less hyperbolic comment of David Helfgott, the classical pianist whom it is about. He just said: "Brilliantissimo!"

It isn't either, but Hicks has achieved an extraordinarily watchable and thoroughly commercial film that doesn't insult the intelligence. It tells an amazing story but avoids becoming aggressively inspirational like Chariots Of Fire. It's direct, but not simplistic.

Anyone told the story might think it was Hollywood pie-in-the-sky. A young Jewish Australian wants to be a pianist, and his father, who has furiously nurtured his son's prodigious talent, orders him not to leave the family to train in Britain. He insists on going, then has a breakdown while playing Rachmaninov, but recovers triumphantly thanks to the love of a good woman.

The whole thing is substantially true. Helfgott, who survived years in a mental institution, will never be "normal" and will end his days as the child he was never able to be when young. He does, however, play concerts — to massive audiences since the film was made — and it's him on the sound-track, too, which perhaps shows that there is a kind of artistic genius that depends on a childlike quality.

Hicks, whose previous work has been mostly documentary, doesn't hesitate to tell the story as honestly as possible. The breakdown seems horrendous, its result a sadly foregone conclusion. And he secures a performance from Geoffrey Rush as the adult David that is outstanding.

Rush has to play a deeply eccentric character. We are first introduced to him playing the piano in a drinking club and being treated like an amiable loony. It is almost but not quite embarrassing, since the actor manages to balance full-scale lunacy and otherworldly loopiness so well that it doesn't seem incorrect to laugh.

We then return to the story's beginning, during which Alex Rafalowicz, as the musically advanced but mocked child, and Noah Taylor, as the intense young man, prove almost equally good.

They and Rush are aided by excellent performances from Armin Mueller-Stahl, who plays the father, and Lynn Redgrave, as the woman who rescues him.

The early part of the film is the most controversial: some Jewish observers have argued long and hard about the character of the overfond father and his decision that his son should not desert the family. They seem to feel either that his attitude is typical of a survivor of the Holocaust, or that it would have been highly unlikely for such a man, whatever his past, to try to prevent his son getting ahead. The father never gives an adequate reason why the boy shouldn't attempt to further his career. It's almost as if he is jealous of his talent.

This is the kind of film, with an appropriately original score from David Hirschfelder and copious draughts of the music Helfgott played, that ought to be as much of a crossover success as Amadeus. Hicks has said that the story of his unlikely hero is about the power of love to both destroy and redeem, and the film certainly gets that message across.

If you have Robert De Niro and Dustin Hoffman in the same movie, you ought to have a head start. But Barry Levinson's **Sleepers** has only a rather dull performance from the former and an eccentric cameo from the latter.

The real spark the film has ignited has been the argument over whether Lorenzo Carcaterra's story about growing up in Hell's Kitchen, New York, and suffering (after a conviction for street crime) in a reformatory full of vicious homosexual warders is fiction or, as the author has claimed, unimproved fact. The consensus is that it is fiction — a bestseller under a false flag.

Unfortunately, its origin is not the only doubtful element of the story, which has been designed by Barry Levinson to attack the way the American penal system locks juvenile offenders in reformatories. In such places they learn nothing — except that they are outsiders, destined to be resentful towards society for life.

The point is well made. But the presentation of the warders as perverts, determined to have their wicked way with the kids, is blatantly homophobic and has been heavily criticised by gay spokesmen.

De Niro is Father Bobby of the Church of the Holy Angels. He is protective of his flock, and particularly of the young men who live on the streets and have other, less concerned, mentors. But he can't do much for Shakes and his pals (well played by Joe Perrino, Brad Renfro, Geoffrey Wigdor and Jonathan Tucker) when they almost cause a death after a street prank goes wrong. They are sent to reformatory, where Kevin Bacon and his friends are waiting to torment them.

When they come out, totally traumatised, and get a chance of revenge, they quickly take it. This lands them in court again, defended by Hoffman's alcoholic lawyer. The question is, will Father Bobby lie to save them from the worst?

With Brad Pitt and Jason Patric playing two of the boys as adults, there's a chance the court case will end the film with a bang rather than a whimper. But Levinson never quite sorts out his priorities or where his real sympathies lie. Consequently, the film has a fudged quality that it can never quite get over.

Star shines too bright for Blanche

THEATRE
Michael Billington

AMONG many other things, Tennessee Williams's A Streetcar Named Desire is a well-upholstered vehicle for a star actress. But while Peter Hall's new production has many fine things in it, and Jessica Lange is unquestionably a star, I don't feel sure she was born to play Blanche Dubois.

Williams's heroine is both a fading relic of the aristocratic American South and an embodiment of the poetic spirit and the potential artist in all of us. Her particular tragedy is that she is brought into collision in the New Orleans French Quarter with her brutish, sexy brother-in-law, Stanley Kowalski, whose mentality, in Harold Clurman's words, "provides the soil for fascism viewed not as a political movement but as a state of being". Undeniably, she patronises Stanley; but her world of desperate imagination is finally destroyed by his crude reality.

It is a beautiful, poetic play that says a lot about human relations and about an America in which sensitivity and aspiration are crushed by realpolitik. But the casting of Lange raises problems.

It is not just that she is famed in the movies for playing strong, independent women. It is that she possesses a healthy, youthful beauty that seems at odds with Williams's portrait of an ageing woman frightened of exposure to the light and ultimately helpless before Stanley's brutality.

Lange conveys some aspects of Blanche very well. The humour is certainly there, and the sexy flirtatiousness that has her squirting jasmine perfume in Stanley's face and cavorting in her slip while the men play poker.

She also crumbles very effectively in the final act as Blanche is hustled off to the asylum. But, although Lange works hard at the role, I still find it hard to believe in her as the delicate creature of Williams's imagination, haunted by her amatory past and the prospect of crows' feet.

Hall's production, however, still reminds us of the power and beauty of the play. William Dudley has designed an atmospheric set dominated by a highly wrought circular staircase. Stephen Edwards's detailed sound score is also filled with the echoes of distant polkas and blue pianos, as well as the onrushing roar of thunderous trains.

The cast acquit themselves well. Stanley Kowalski is not a part that comes naturally to English actors, but Toby Stephens has the right swagger and muscularity and, in the final gesture when he tears the paper lantern off a light bulb and presents it to Blanche, emotional cruelty.

Imogen Stubbs also convincingly presents Blanche's sister, Stella, as a woman happily in thrall to Stanley's animal energy. And Christian Burgess makes something touching of Mitch, the decent man who is almost Blanche's salvation.

After 50 years, the play survives because it says something touching and true about solitude, defeat and the denial of the poetic spirit in post-war America.

Performing horses in the big, big top

CIRCUS
John Vidal

TEN minutes into some spiffy clowning at the start of Saltimbanco, a Lycra-clad Hollywood creature with a tail and a Canadian accent materialises and milks an uneasy round of applause for the shows's corporate sponsor, a global communications firm. She/it glides off and the clowns give way to reptilians who slither around to bland music on the edge of a flowery dance floor, making the evolutionary point that you are spineless and nameless until you get a mobile phone.

Cirque du Soleil is a cultural hybrid. It has evolved out of Canada via Las Vegas and China. It is now a global circus, not just because its performers come from 21 countries, but in its transnational financial and artistic ambition. It now has four companies performing on three continents; it has a permanent show in a Las Vegas hotel and has done a 12-year deal with Disney. It turns over more than $125 million a year, has been seen live by 10 million people. It must be the first circus with its own Internet site.

It succeeds (financially, at least) because it is culturally anonymous. It can be plonked anywhere in the free-wheeling, free-trading world where there are enough adults who will pay between $39 and $75 a ticket (or at least $165 for a family night out), where a corporation will underwrite it and where there's a motorway that can carry the 35 trucks and 750 tons of gear it needs to put on a show.

Saltimbanco claims to celebrate the street, but this is emission-free life in the shopping mall rather than the raw urban jungle. Now it merges dance with synchronised swimming, ballet with disco, athletics with acrobatics. Here be disco and muzak; there pop and ballet. This is nonsense catch-all culture. Even the name Saltimbanco is suitable for the transnational, corporate world: it means, in Italian, "jump into a bench", suggesting the rough and tumble of street life, or "jump into the bank" suggesting public limited companies and city mergers. Take your pick.

But if it smells more of some genetically modified underarm deodorant than circus, the producers have hoovered up some of the world's most impressive acts and performers. The best Western circus skills are now as accomplished as the best of Chinese or Russian, and I have never seen such feats of strength, balance or timing as at the show at London's Royal Albert Hall. Already, the circus is attracting Olympic gold medal gymnasts and swimmers.

Nor have I have never seen more impressive trapeze work, such jumping, leaping, diving and falling. These aerial artists achieve zero gravity, suspend themselves in space, walk on air, propel themselves in open-mouthed wonder 10, 20, 30 metres into the air, then free-fall, skydive and tumble impossibly. Performers suspend each other by their ankles, feet become arms, bodies stand horizontal and the spirit soars. It is astonishingly difficult and accomplished.

They may be moved, but we, the audience, are curiously not. It is hard to imagine more impressive skills or such splendid physical prowess, but in this overproduced, anonymous environment the acts can lose their theatrical quality and become more like freak shows — unattainably weird, only taking advantage of the performers. Little better than performing horses.

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With the best will in the world

TELEVISION
Nancy Banks-Smith

ELEMENT Of Doubt (Carlton) opened with a running bath. That is always ominous in a thriller. Joseph Smith, the brides-in-the-bath murderer, used to play Nearer My God To Thee on the organ after his exertions in the bathroom. And, since Psycho, showers are ominous too. It is a wonder that people of a nervous disposition can bear to get washed at all.

Element Of Doubt has a deep, dirty, disused swimming pool too, with *something at the bottom*. I was reminded of an Australian mini-series in which the husband of a rich woman introduced a salt-water crocodile — surely with a bit of a struggle — into her swimming pool.

Beth (Gina McKee), who is married to Richard (Nigel Havers), is understandably twitchy. She has a quizzical right eyebrow, which is put to increasingly urgent use.

Richard's first wife falls to her death from a balcony. Then his mother-in-law is precipitated through a windscreen. Never — as grannie used to say — two without three.

He urgently needs half a million and she has inherited just that. (Element Of Doubt is sponsored by Midland Bank, who, presumably, failed to stump up.) As she grows ever more frightened, his charm and consideration increase. Just as you are thinking the woman is neurotic, he drowns her in the bath and dumps her body at sea. Sprinkling sea salt in the bath was, I thought, a particularly deft touch.

At this point the tension is tightest. Twisting and coiling like an eel in murky water, he slithers out of trouble but, in his dreams, she rises from the water, screaming, "Never!" If it weren't for Brian Tufano's pearly seascapes, I'd say it would look even better in black and white.

Bess, not to be confused with Beth, is another rich woman. Neither of her husbands tries to murder her, which, at times, seems a pity. Bess is a spirited, turn-of-the-century Dallas heiress at the start of *A Woman Of Independent Means* (Channel 4). The wigs make it well worth watching to the end. Bess turns into Mrs Merton. Her black maid, who is not so rich, is not so lucky.

The world turns. There are penny farthings, then Model T Fords. Clothes get prettier, then uglier. Plumbing succeeds chamber pots. It is not unlike time-lapse photography in which the countryside freezes, flowers and fruits in five minutes. Or, in the case of A Women Of Independent Means, five hours.

There is a certain simple truth about the writing. You recognise her pains and problems — and her props. My grandmother wore a nightcap like that with a ribbon-covered button on top and circles of ribbon and laces sewn round it; and, like Bess's mother-in-law (Brenda Fricker), she never said "pregnant", she said "confined".

Brenda Fricker gives her scenes unexpected punch, like a stout boot coming through a shoddy door.

A daughter is knocked down ("There doesn't appear to be any brain damage."). Rob helps the war effort. ("We can provide the horseshoes!"). The house catches fire ("Help!"). Bess travels abroad ("I cannot believe we'll be in England tomorrow!"). Nor, seeing the Eiffel Tower, can I. It was all shot in Texas.

Men come and go but her money lasts, so I'll pass on some of her financial advice. She has just given her grand-daughter the customary colossal marriage cheque.

Grand-daughter: "I don't know what to say."

Bess: "Say you'll always remember that capital is to be invested and only income is to be spent."

And another thing. If you marry Nigel Havers, make a will leaving the lot to the cat.

Seeing a bigger picture

ART
Adrian Searle

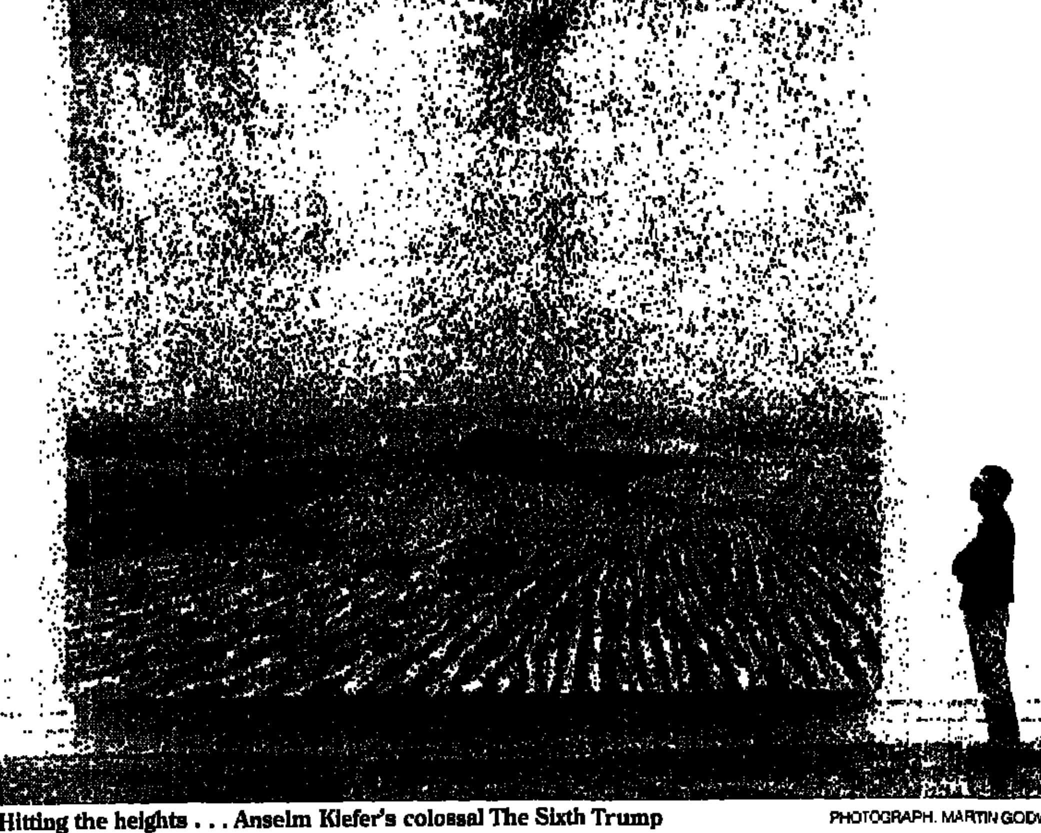
A BALDING man lying among dry stalks and leaves, beneath ink-blot sunflowers gone to seed. Perhaps he's sleeping. Maybe he's dead. It is an unexpected self-portrait of the artist, supine in a field, in the Hatha Yoga position of *shavasana*. Heavens above, it's Anselm Kiefer. During the seventies and eighties Kiefer produced one of the more contentious bodies of work to come out of Germany in the post-war period. His momentous exhibition at the Whitechapel Gallery in 1981 impressed the British art audience, and the public, with his sombre parade of history-laden, messy, huge, burnt-out landscapes, his blasted heaths and forests, his wrecked Valhallas.

Written on to the paintings, as well as noted in their titles, were quotes from Holocaust poet Paul Celan, nods to Wagner and German myth, intimations of the mentality of war and destruction. These were paintings clogged as much with history as with their agglomerations of straw, shellac and tar, their sediments of pigment, their churned surfaces.

Here at last was an artist (as opposed to a historian or a thinker) and a painter to boot (rather than a film-maker, a poet or a novelist) who had found a way to tackle the question of Germanness in the wake of National Socialism and the Holocaust, Germany's mad collective dream.

Kiefer appeared to prove that painting, far from being dead, had the innate capacity to deal with the biggest issues of the 20th century, instead of merely paying lip-service to them.

Big themes, big ideas, big paintings. Kiefer, who was born on the banks of the Rhine in 1945, had apparently reinvented allegory, history painting and war painting, and in a manner we were utterly unprepared for. As much as his work was an unexpected revelation, it also seemed inevitable. A hushed reverence overcame his spectators and his commentators, and for a while Anselm Kiefer, wunderkind scion of the late, great Joseph Beuys, could do no wrong.



Hitting the heights . . . Anselm Kiefer's colossal The Sixth Trump PHOTOGRAPH: MARTIN GODWIN

It was also difficult to disentangle one's feelings towards the momentousness of his subject — German history, and how to address it — from the intrinsic merits of the works themselves. Through the eighties, Kiefer's atelier grew into a kind of industry. He employed trillions of assistants, his paintings were weathered and distressed to give them the look of age, use, time and value. They seemed to roll off a production line — Kiefer's war effort — an art which stood as a proud analogue to European culture in general: a palimpsest, built on its own ruins. And then came Kiefer's lead doodlebugs, lead bathtubs, lead libraries and leaden gravitas. Kiefer became, by the end of the last decade, a circus on permanent world tour, and he began to look like just another artist on the make, over-inflated and blighted by his own reputation, and the demands of museum curators and collectors.

But then his audience got bored and irritated with all that teutonic heavy breathing. Weren't all his paintings depressingly distressed? Great washed-up, weathered wrecks, overladen with their guilt-sodden cargoes? The work became both more obvious and more generalised, and Kiefer seemed to be sinking under his own weight. It even occurred to some that the artist was half in love with the history he was trying to exorcise.

KIEFER himself became aware that there could be a problem. In an interview earlier this year he said: "If I had started cultivating post-war gloom, it would have become a manner, a mannerism . . . the antithesis of art." One could quibble over the if, but then artists are allowed to cover their tracks. In 1991, the year of German re-unification, Kiefer closed his studio and moved, first to New York, then to the south of France, near Montpelier. For a while, he stopped making art. Kiefer's rebirth, and his re-emergence in Britain in a two-venue show of new work at Anthony d'Offay and at the South London Gallery until February marks a change of emphasis, although Kiefer is still the Romantic wary of Romanticism, the history painter suspicious of historicism, the sceptical would-be mystic in the material world.

Taken as a whole, Kiefer's new work is as difficult as it is compelling. Always a bibliophile, Kiefer has developed a taste for reading the kind of stuff that gives you bedsores: esoteric texts, burrowing to the metaphysical arcana of Robert Fludd, the English Rosicrucian; the 17th century Spanish poetry of Francesco de Quevedo, alchemical texts, Biblical references, the Caballa, C G Jung, all stitched together in a way that ends up as indigestible and intentionally preposterous as Umberto Eco's Foucault's Pendulum. Luckily, no one has as yet alerted Kiefer to the joys of yogic flying, but there is the teensiest glimmer of New Age waffle about his newest stew of references, however soulful the work appears.

But Kiefer is not so easily disposed of. What we have in this new double-slot show is an uneven but commanding performance. Some paintings are only big. Kiefer manages to be enormous, sombre, delicate, portentous, nightmarish, illustrative, repetitive, overstretched and utterly memorable, all at once.

He is also, thankfully, an ironist. "Everything we say is fiction . . . irony is indispensable. What we say is always a bit ridiculous . . . people who use words without irony are fanatics," the artist recently said. Kiefer also says he uses words in his work to irritate his critics, so perhaps we don't need to catch all the references — it's the fact they're there that counts, the fictions that drive his imagination.

It is an uneven show, but one in which Kiefer puts the German past behind him. Amid the dense esoterica, the sunflowers and the annotations, are some marvellous things. The sunflowers are everywhere, in stark paintings of their black, blown heads wilting against whiteness; silhouetted and surrounding the woodcuts of a naked man; real sunflower seeds exploding in star-burst galaxies across the paintings, ejaculations of black seeds, squalls of them, skies of them. The seeds are like stars for Kiefer and they at once aerate and exacerbate his paintings, like clouds of cluster flies, like particles of light from the black sun of melancholy.

In Kiefer's vast paintings of a vast North African desert, beautifully installed at the South London Gallery, a rain of black seeds explodes over the milky skies, over the wadis, rills and scarps which stretch into the pallid blue distance. These huge paintings — I hate to admit — made me feel like fainting. The evil, Albert Speer-like buildings in some works at d'Offay's rear up under a black sky broken by searchlights and radiated by numbers, the calibrations of a kind of vertigo. A painting of a decaying, ruined Mayan pyramid, The Golden Bull, references the division of the colonies in Latin America by Pope Alexander VI, enemy of Savanarola. A trickle of gold runs down the broken stones, an intimation of sacrifice and the transubstantiation of blood and gold.

Germany, it turns out, was not the only nation that dared to dream, and where the dream turned into a nightmare: "Spiritual understanding of the idea of metamorphosis makes it easier to die," Kiefer has said. "That is what the figure is thinking about in some of my paintings." He lies beneath Van Gogh's blackened sunflowers, and in the shadow of the pyramid, wondering where the hell to go next.

Guardian reviewers uncover half a dozen recent novels that were ignored by the media and give them their due

Unsung fictional heroes

Andrew Biswell

The Marx Family Saga
by Juan Goytisolo trans Peter Bush
166pp Faber £14.99

KARL MARX is alive and well and living with his family in contemporary London. Home from a hard day's work at the British Library, he joins Jenny and the kids as they zap between TV channels. The newsflashes proclaim the latest on the decline and fall of the Soviet bloc. But as "Marx" watches the pictures, will he acknowledge any responsibility for the state in which Europe finds itself? By transplanting him into the 20th century, Juan Goytisolo is able to put both Marxism and consumer capitalism under the microscope.

What, the novel asks, among other questions, would the father of scientific socialism have made of an episode of The Price Is Right? Meditating wisely and profoundly on the function of the European novelist in the post-Marxist world, the Goytisolo narrator steps out of his story to pass comment on the book we are reading.

We learn that his aim is to write a fictionalised biography of the Marx family that will keep faith with its subjects by containing nothing of possible value in terms of movie adaptation or other forms of mass capitalism. In order to keep the book out of danger from commercial exploitation, there will have to be frequent digressions, and the plot must be hard to follow.

But the appearance of difficulty is all part of Goytisolo's joke, at the same time as being central to his wider aesthetic. Many of the experimental features of the writing, such as disrupted chronology and syntax, will be familiar to readers of his previous novels — such as Quarantine and Makbara. But here they are deployed with a greater sense of purpose — and to wickedly entertaining effect.



Ground breaker . . . Marx is alive and well in Juan Goytisolo's novel

Linda Grant

The Emigrants
by W G Sebald trans Michael Hulse
Harvill 237pp £14.99

IN THE summer of 1970 a German academic arrives to take up a teaching post in Norwich. Searching for a flat he discovers — hidden amongst a stand of trees — a large neo-classical house and, within, its reclusive occupant Dr Henry Selwyn, who like St Francis has turned his home into a hermitage among the birds and smaller animals.

The stillness of the neglected house is occasionally disturbed by huge Edwardian kitchen devices as they clank through corridors. Glasshouses, run to ruin, still yield a simple vegetable diet, and the tennis court, like so much else, is overgrown and in disrepair. We seem to be in one of England's last few unknown and enchanted places inhabited by what England does best, the nurture of its own eccentrics.

But we discover abruptly that Selwyn — the apparent English eccentric — is beset by homesickness, and in particular the acute memories of his exile from a Lithuanian *shtetl village in the last year of the* past century (the time of the pogroms), the ship in the Riga docks, the immigrant families on the decks, the curious absence of the Statue of Liberty at their destination — for like most of those who were to become British Jews the family had been tricked and found London rather than America to be their destination.

W G Sebald's four narratives in The Emigrants explore the pain of Jewish exile and homelessness and, with the utmost delicacy and quiet tact, address what seems so mysterious to others, the suicide that overtakes survivors of the worst of traumas in old age. There is a painter in Manchester who is the only member of his family not to have perished in Germany; the aesthete son of a wealthy German-Jewish American family who travels to Jerusalem and discovers decay and dereliction there; a teacher in Germany with only a trace of Jewish blood who none the less, under the race laws, is prohibited from carrying out his profession.

Accompanying the text are a number of black and white photographs purporting to be from the family albums of his characters. They disturb our sense of the past as finished business. The book's writing, in an extraordinarily fine translation, seems detached and distant from what it describes — until the final lines when the narrator must avert his eyes from a photograph of two young Jewish women in the Lodz ghetto who stare at him with a relentless and steady gaze. Germany may have been intent on putting the past behind it, but Sebald, in a book Susan Sontag has described as a masterpiece, insists that for some people, memory is all that they have of value.

Matt Seaton

The Kiln
by William McIlvanney
Sceptre 288pp £6.99 pbk

CONCERNING the bittersweet reminiscences of Tom Docherty — a fifty-something teacher-cum-writer with a crumbling marriage — about his younger self, Tam, an uncertain, enquiring 17-year-old from Graithnock on the threshold of life.

Much of the novel turns on an episodic narration of Tam's summer, specifically his desperate quest to lose his virginity. The result is a kind of Caledonian Portnoy's Complaint.

When Tam's trousers are not round his ankles, he is wrestling with Kierkegaardian abstractions and the poetry of Pushkin. He may be spending his summer drinking sweet tea with labourers, but already he is on his way from the public bar to the senior common room. At this moment, Tam's is still a narrative of hope and expectation, but the story finds its counterpoint in the disillusion of elder Tom, a man who seems to have used his education chiefly to compose smart put-downs of lesser mortals. The mismatch between the cynicism of Tom the elder and the naïvety of Tam the younger begs a multitude of intriguing questions — just one of the virtues of a cunning and well-written novel.

D J Taylor

Stone Kingdoms
by David Park
Phoenix House 278pp
£14.99 hbk £8.99 pbk

THE SCENE: an East African hospital. A young woman, Naomi, is recovering from a traumatic episode that has left her badly burnt and temporarily (she hopes) blinded. Attended by a chatty doctor, she begins to piece together the events of the preceding months — her work for a relief agency in a refugee camp, refusal to leave when the camp is closed down, and a perilous trek to a coastal city enflamed by civil war.

All this comes interspersed with Naomi's memories of her early life, as the only child of an unhappy Protestant cleric on the Donegal coast (she remembers "the constant sense of being under siege, as if the house is trapped between the mountains, the valleys of England and the unrelenting encroachment of the sea") and her later career as a teacher in a school that straddles the Belfast front line.

The links between Ulster and tribal Africa, between the IRA and the wide-eyed African teenagers favouring their Kalashnikovs, are perpetually apparent. Occasionally Park's handling of these ironies is a touch obtrusive — notably in a scene where Naomi and her hospital assistant Nadra discuss the differences between Western civilisation and African barbarism (unclear, as you might guess), and he achieves his best effects in a chain of weighty symbols: the coral reef to which Naomi swims shortly after her arrival in the country; clothing stained with her first menstrual blood buried under a rock; above all, perhaps, the memory of a far-off incident in which her mother courageously came to the aid of a bullied taxi driver.

Like Park's previous novel, The Rye Man (one of the great lost books of 1994), Stone Kingdoms is a terrific achievement. Go out and buy it.

Lucy Atkins

The Hook
by Raffaella Barker
Bloomsbury 192pp £14.99

THERE are a lot of fish in this book. They shimmer around, obligingly casting light on the human world around them. They breed, they eat and they die — hooked out of the water by fishermen or the beaks of greedy heron. And there are a lot of hooks, too. People hook one another — through sex, marriage or deceit. Or they are just hooked — on booze, on each other. Besides, the story itself has a hook — a question of guilt, of truth painfully brought to light in court.

Twenty-year-old Christy falls in love with Mick, an Irishman who claims to be a photographic journalist. First love is infected by her own attempts to cope with bereavement (her mother's death) as she and her father construct a new life around a trout farm, built on land her father wins in a poker game. As the angling venture grows, so do Christy's suspicions that there's something fishy about Mick with his intermittent wadges of cash and unwillingness to explain their source. The opening pages proclaim a judge's verdict on him in a trial — guilty, but the actual charges only emerge towards the end of Christy's account. The tension springs from uncertainty. Is he a terrorist? A murderer? A monster? The story is bolstered by clever thematic patterning and disorientating shifts in focus: an insect landing on a glass ornament, twins framed at a graveside, images seen through a lens or in a blow-up. And ultimately Christy only gains confidence to end the relationship when she manages to see Mick for what he is. Subtle and engaging, if a little overwrought.

Laura Tennant

In A Pig's Ear
by Paul Bryers
Bloomsbury 277pp £14.99

WHAT great, all-encompassing narrative will supply total-coverage answers to questions of history and destiny? The King Arthur story, of course. What, now and in England? No, now in Europe and America, in Paul Bryers's entertaining and fiercely plotted intellectual thriller.

The narrator is Milan, a Czech pyschotherapist, who escapes to the West in 1968 and sets up a practice in Hollywood. His best friend is Adam, the American who helped him get out of Prague and grows up to be a famous film director.

The book opens with Milan imprisoned in Germany; the story he relates — to a prison farm pig — concerns his and Adam's return to Europe to make a movie about King Arthur, and their increasingly messy involvement in German neo-Nazism and their own mysterious pasts. It hardly needs to be said that in Milan's private musings and in the scheme of the book they are also Merlin and Arthur.

As Adam digs deeper into Europe's murky history (the repressed unconscious to America's breezy conscious) he also becomes involved with an East European ex-lover (Morgan la Faye) and the son she had conceived by him a quarter of a century before (Mordred).

The last thing Bryers wants to do, however, is merely write an updated version of the Morte d'Arthur, and the reader doesn't get a chance to obsess about who's who because Bryers makes it quite clear himself. He's much more interested in exploring the lacunae between his story and the Arthurian myth, and the way in which each points up the other.

Adam's Camelot, his "Big Idea", is the attempt to relaunch the Prague film studios as a European Hollywood that would perform the same unifying task as the American original. But far from being visionary, the project is ludicrously hubristic and doomed to failure.

Then again, we are invited to speculate that all such grand schemes are totalitarian in effect: as one young film-maker theorises excitedly, what was Hitler's Third Reich but "some vile mockery of the whole Arthurian legend, with Berchtesgaden substituted for Camelot, the SS for the Knights of the Round Table, might for right, and racial supremacy for chivalry?" Milan's reluctance to "work through" the past is connected to an



King Arthur lives . . . in John Boorman's Excalibur (1981)

atavistic obsession with the similarity between Merlin's dark patrimony — he was, "according to legend, the progeny of a fiend from Hell and a virgin from South Wales" — and his own, the book's best-kept and most sinister secret. In this novel no amount of enlightened psychotherapy can wipe out the sins of the fathers.

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Paperbacks

Nicholas Lezard

Madame Blavatsky's Baboon, by Peter Washington (Secker & Warburg, £12.99)

IN CASE you think that we live in times exceptionally and frighteningly congenial to bogus gurus, remember Madame Blavatsky, Gurdjieff and Krishnamurti, who infected the early part of the century with the most appalling cod-mysticism. This book contains chapter and verse on these fraudsters; it is perhaps a paradoxical measure of its success — and history's success, in consigning Theosophy and its relatives to oblivion — that one wonders why Washington has spent so much energy writing about these people and their dupes.

The Decadent Gardener, by Medlar Lucan and Durian Gray (Dedalus, £6.99)

UNDER normal circumstances my interest in gardening is not even detectable at quantum level, but this is enthralling. Plans for sinister, corrupting gardens, planted with poisonous plants such as Hellebore, Hemlock and Meadow Saffron ("Symptoms are too disgusting and horrible to describe"). Contains the full text of Rochester's play Sodom — for production in the garden theatre, of course — itself an uncanny prolepsis of contemporary fears about Aids. The only gardening book you will ever need.

Tales from the Kathasaritsagara, by Somadeva, trs and int Arshia Sattar (Penguin Classics, £8.99)

THE TITLE literally means the "Ocean of the Sea of Story" — a collection of Sanskrit tales which, unlike the Panchatantra, are not so much amoral as wonderfully humanly wise. Women lust after men not their husbands; gamblers pretend to be ascetics, and are not punished; a Brahmin makes a fool of himself in front of a prostitute. "Charming" might sound like a condescending word to use in this context, but charm is what these stories do. "Eclectic and profane" are the words used in the introduction, and they are bang on.

Not Inconsiderable . . . Being the Life and Times of John Major, by Patrick Wright (Andre Deutsch, £5.99)

A CARTOON biography of the Prime Minister, drawn from such sources as Penny Junor's The Major Enigma and the PM's brother Terry Major-Ball's Major Major. All the usual jokes — gnomes, oh yes, biros, Terry, greyness — but they are executed not only with a superbly deadpan line but a malice and viciousness that is wonderfully uncalled-for. The section dealing with the affair between young John and that attractive divorcee from across the street is particularly good. I now finally feel I understand the man.

Sweet dreams . . . A familiar haunting from M R James drawn by McBryde (1915) MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY

When the haunting stops

Ian Sansom

The Oxford Book of Twentieth-Century Ghost Stories
ed Michael Cox
Oxford 425pp £17.99

"*GHOST STORY*". A phrase pale and insubstantial, a thing both dull and impalpable. Compare it to the promise of colourful, bloody and vomit-hued splatter implicit in "horror" or the hard fact and high-resolution detail suggested by "science fiction", or — more pertinently perhaps — the extraordinary tingle currently generated by the combination of the letter "X" and the word "files". There's no doubt about it, the ghost story is in a sorry state, out-done and out-dated by true-life tales of the unexpected and hyped-up accounts of extra-terrestrials.

There is a world of difference, though, between the traditional ghost story and this current cult of the unexplained. Ghost stories are about the familiar dead — about ancestors, families and friends. They are — explicitly and undeniably — about us. They work best when set in the home and when the disturbance is purely domestic. But the X-Files and all the other fashionable books and programmes about the paranormal tend to be about other beings, and other, far-off places.

There are several reasons for this. Where the ghost story might be said to be about alienation from the self, to be literally self-contained, the current spate of stories and books and films seem to be about alienation on a much wider scale — from government, from community and, indeed, from the whole of the terrestrial world.

Where the ghost story provided the perfect expression for the anxieties of an age of bourgeois individualism, the X-Files and its ilk express our underlying fears of the encroaching powers of the state. Where ghost stories are about grief and doubt and ravaged minds, stories about aliens and conspiracy theories are distress calls from a society which feels itself under threat not just from within, but also from outside, from the ominous threatening Other.

So, given its unfashionability and its unsuitability for expressing our late-capitalist, post-modern condition, how does the 20th century ghost story fare? On the evidence of Michael Cox's anthology, not at all well.

Ghost stories, like any other stories, are of course difficult to write in whatever age, and under whatever circumstances. "The supernatural", wrote Walter Scott in 1827, "is peculiarly subject to be exhausted by coarse handling and repeated pressure." It is also, he went on, "of a character which it is extremely difficult to sustain and of which a very small proportion may be said to be better than the whole." Cox's problem is that he has already given us that small proportion of the best modern ghost stories in his magisterial Oxford Book Of English Ghost Stories (1986), and although there are some notable exceptions — Angela Carter's "The Loves of Lady Purple" and Alison Lurie's "The Highboy", for example — many of the pieces included in his new anthology are lacklustre and second-rate.

There is, though, no doubt that ghost stories will continue to be written, since the writing of ghost stories seems almost to be a natural human reflex, an expression of our common refusal to accept that when we're dead, we're dead. And there's no doubt that ghosts are peculiarly well suited to being written up and written about, since they share with the act of writing that essential aspect of secondariness, or belatedness, which is what makes them so fascinating: they are a trace; they represent something that both is and is not there; they exist as both absence and presence. It is surely significant that the best ghost stories demand to be read aloud — it is almost as if we revolt against their naturally bloodless state and insist on their being bodied forth, given some kind of living, breathing reality.

Readers, too, will undoubtedly continue to demand tales of the supernatural, of whatever kind, because they help to convince us of our own corporeality and sensitivity. While reading this book, at the very point in Oliver Onions's story "Rooum" at which the eponymous hero "dropped, half on his knees against the white tiling", the carriage door on the train on which I was travelling suddenly and inexplicably slammed open and shut. I felt excited, tense, alive. In reading the story, my senses had been sharpened. Again, now, as I write, the creaking and sighing sounds of a house late at night suddenly seem sinister and strange. Which is absolute nonsense, of course, if you think about it, but that's how ghost stories — indeed, any stories — get you going. You start generating meanings, you start imagining and inventing for yourself. And once you've started, you can't stop — you see and search for meaning everywhere.

It is impossible not to notice, for example, that the text of Cox's anthology is scattered throughout with typographical errors, or what W W Skeat once defined as "ghost-words": "Words which have no real existence . . . being mere coinages due to the blunders of printers or scribes." It is a trivial point, and it doesn't really matter, but after the stimulus of story, even such blunders seem somehow significant.

Brains on a bender

David Horspool

Buzz: The Science and Lore of Alcohol and Caffeine
by Stephen Braun
Oxford 214pp £17.99

THE MOST popular drug in the world is caffeine, and alcohol is a close second. Although fermentation and distilling have been with us longer than coffee roasting, both drugs have taken a lasting hold of enquiring and thrill-seeking minds, as Stephen Braun reminds us in Buzz.

Writers have pondered the effects of alcohol at least since Aristotle, who discussed everything from the drunk's predilection to tears to brewer's droop. Aristotle's proposed explanations revolved mainly around his belief that alcohol raises the body temperature, but it is only in the past 20 years or so that any more convincing answers have been put forward. The huge advances in neuroscience have made it possible for the first time to have an inkling of why alcohol has such varied effects. Caffeine, and its more limited consequences, has also been the subject of research. Questions about its restorative and inspirational qualities, asked by everyone from Balzac to the Nobel-prizewinning neuroscientist Leon Cooper, are finding responses.

Buzz aims to give the layman an understanding of this research. It also shows how what Braun's subtitle calls the "lore" of these mind-bending substances can be by turns accurate and misleading. Perhaps most interestingly, Braun's graphic explanations show how wrong we are to think of alcohol, as we have so often been told, as a simple "depressant". Unlike cocaine or amphetamine, its more potent cousins, alcohol does not have a single point of attack in the brain, which it fires on with great intensity. Braun describes alcohol's work among the neurotransmitters as that of a "pharmacological hand-grenade", less intense than the big guns, but more scattered in its consequences.

In one way, alcohol mimics the effect of valium in the brain, passing molecular messages that reduce the rate of firing in some neurones, which has the effect of reducing anxiety. But the invigorating, not to say euphoria-inducing, effects of alcohol are no illusion. They, too, have a chemical explanation, to do with alcohol's effect on the brain's "circuits of bliss". By moderately increasing dopanine levels, alcohol produces the same outcome, though at much lower levels, as cocaine and amphetamine. But alcohol goes one better than this, passing itself off as opium or a bout of vigorous exercise, both of which cause the release of endorphins, another of the brain's pleasure-givers.

Braun would be an irresponsible elucidator if he did not also explain the similar neurological reasons for alcohol's less desirable effects. The general sedative effect of alcohol is a consequence of inhibiting glutamate receptors — "the brain's most common excitatory neurotransmitter" — just three drinks shutting down about 80 per cent of them. That's why a few glasses make you sleepy. And for the same reason, alcohol impairs the formation of short-term memories (which can account for everything from forgetting the name of the person to whom you have just been introduced to the full Christmas party blackout, which Braun uncharitably only associates with alcoholics).

Caffeine's effects are far less wide-ranging, and form something of a postscript to the book. Braun does show why, however, it is almost impossible to overdose on caffeine. Caffeine's stimulative properties are a consequence of its ability to stop one of the brain's "brakes" from functioning.

Unlike alcohol, however, it has no access to any accelerators, so it can only stimulate the brain to its own maximum level, and not over-stimulate it. That is not to say, though, that you can't drink too much coffee, and Braun discusses a small, growing band of registered "caffeine addicts", whose lives have been seriously damaged by the bean. Buzz may not stop anyone from indulging in either vice but it's nice to know what you're doing to yourself.

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Chess Leonard Barden

TOP seeded Michael Adams had a disastrous start at Hastings in the chess world's longest running international event. Though Adams is ranked world no 15 and is Britain's all-time no 2 after Nigel Short, he began with three successive defeats, escaping a fourth only after one of the most bizarre endgame finishes ever seen in grandmaster play.

His opponent, Glenn Flear's missed chance will achieve legendary status thanks to coverage in the world's chess magazines. In short, a grandmaster overlooking mate in two is the equivalent in chess of a missed penalty in a World Cup shoot-out.

Flear (White) had king at b6, rook at g7, knight at f6; Adams (Black) had king at d8, rook at g1, pawns at b3, d6 and g3. Flear only saw, and played, 1 Rd7+ Kc8 2 Rg7 Kd8 3 Rd7+ Kc8 4 Rg7, *drawing by repeated moves.* Instead he can mate in two by 1 Kb7 and 2 Rd7 or in three by 1 Rd7+ Kc8 2 Re7 and 3 Re8.

Xie Jun, the former world women's champion, was Hasting's first Chinese player, previous invitations having been declined as Beijing seemed to make Hastings a pawn in Hong Kong politics. Xie Jun won her first two games in good style before slipping back.

Otherwise, the most interesting newcomer was Edouard Rozentalis, the Lithuanian No 1 who has made a name as an unconventional ideas man in opening play.

Milov v Rozentalis, Liechtenstein 1996.

1 d4 e6 2 c4 Nf6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 **e3 0-0 5 Bd3 d5 6 a3 Bxc3+ 7 bxc3 c6!?** In a famous Botvinnik v Capablanca game, Black's c5, b6 and Ba6 was met by White's cxd5 and later e4-e5 with a strong K-side attack. Instead, Rozentalis plans central counterplay.

8 a4?! 8 Nf3-e5 and f4 with a K-side attack looks more focused. **b6 9 Ba3 Re8 10 Nf3 Ba6 11 Ne5 Qc8 12 0-0 Nbd7 13 f4 c5 14 Rc1 Qb7!** The light squares around e4 are Black's target for the rest of the game.

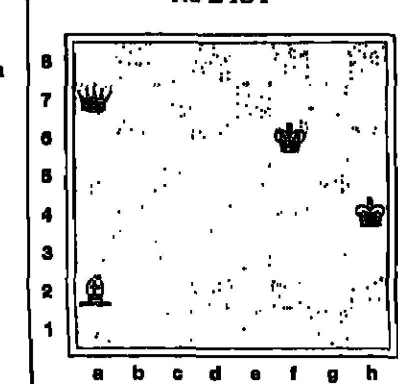
15 Rf3 Rad8 16 Rh3 Nf8 17 Qf3 Ne4 18 dxc5 bxc5 19 Rb1 19 Bxc5 Nxc5? 20 Bxh7+ Nxh7 21 Qh5 looks interesting, but is refuted by 19 Bxc5 f6!

Qc7 20 Bxe4 dxe4 21 Qxe4 f6 22 Nd3? The final mistake. Better 22 Nf3, though Rd7 with Bb7 favours Black.

f5 23 Qe5 Qc6 24 Rg3 Suddenly, White is losing material, for 24 Nf3 Nd7 traps the queen while 24 Qxc5 Qe4! skewers knight and rook.

Ng6 25 Rxg6 hxg6 26 Nxc5 Bxc4 27 e4 Qd6 28 Qxd6 Rxd6 29 Nb7 Rd2 30 Nd6 Bd3 31 Rb7 Rd8 fxe4! 32 Nxe8 e3 33 h3 e2 34 Kf2 Rd1 is quicker. **32 exf5 exf5 33 Ra7 Ra2 34 Bb4 Be4 35 g3** *Bd2 36 Ra6 Rd7 37 c4 Rc2* **38 c5 Bd5 39 Nb5 Re7 40 Nd4 Rc4 41 Resigns.**

No 2454



White mates in three moves, against any defence (by CH Wheeler). *One previous solver* **took four hours, but two experts each took 10 minutes. How do you compare?**

No 2453: 1 Rb4 Bf3 2 Rf4 and 3 Rf8. If Bxd5 2 Rxd5 and 3 Ra5. If Bh3 2 R7b7 and 3 Nc7. Not 1 Re7? Bf3 2 Re3 Bd1.

Goosing around

Mark Cocker

NORFOLK'S Yare valley is so flat that the huge smokestack at Cantley sugarbeet factory is visible from a distance of more than 15km. Technically it is a grim industrial eyesore in an agrarian landscape, although I personally find the pervasive, sickly sweet smell of its smoke worse than the appearance. I also have to acknowledge that from a distance on a clear day, when the great plumes of vapour balloon outwards to merge with the wider horizon, this chimney has a monumental and vulgar beauty.

Fortunately, the factory is not Cantley's only distinction. Beyond the smokestack is a marsh stretching to the Yare riverbank, where the more important of Britain's only two flocks of bean geese gathers each winter (the other is in central Scotland). Records from the 1920s indicate the clear loyalty of these geese not only to this particular area but also to a set seasonal routine.

Typically, most of the 300-400 birds arrive at Cantley between the end of November and mid December, having stopped-over in northern Denmark. Most then depart for Denmark again at the end of February. During their stay in Norfolk they mainly feed on just three Yare marshes, Cantley being the favourite. At nights they are faithful to a single roost site, and if this small wooded lake is ever frozen or disturbed by shooting, then another nearby pool serves as a substitute.

By sheer good fortune, in 1987 22 of the Cantley geese were neck-banded on their breeding grounds in the taiga forest of northern Sweden, a procedure that enabled certain identification of some individuals and thus more intimate insights into their behaviour.

One of the more remarkable revelations showed that within the flock's collective traditions, single birds had striking variations.

Two years in a row, for instance, one neck-banded male and his mate failed to appear with the main December arrivals, but turned up several weeks later, in January. Presumably, having paused at the Danish stop-over with the others, this couple had resisted the flock's communal urge to move off for Cantley, then made an independent journey to Britain at their own slower pace.

EVEN more extraordinary were the discoveries about another of the neck-banded males. When, in 1988, he was the only one of the previous year's marked birds not to reappear at Cantley, everyone believed he was dead. Yet when ornithologists examined a large flock of bean geese in northern Denmark in the following spring, they were surprised to find this missing male still alive. Even more remarkable was the fact that he had been reunited with his old neck-banded partner, who had passed her winter at Cantley.

Most people, when confronted by the phenomenon of migration — sometimes involving transcontinental journeys repeated every year over countless generations — cannot help being impressed by its sheer scale. Yet this can lead to an impression of randomness, that the birds are cosmopolitan globetrotters with wide-ranging geographical experience.

But studies, such as this one on bean geese, reveal the acute level of precision involved. While birds may cover long distances, the number of places they know intimately may be very small: a few favoured fields and marshes along the route and one particular destination, like Cantley. Some of their routines are even more specific — the geese now present on this Norfolk marsh might have spent every winter night for several years on just one small pool.

However, if such studies show the birds' tastes to be more parochial than previously believed, then their capacity to locate these geographical pinpricks suggests navigational powers even more awesome than we ever imagined.

ILLUSTRATION: ANN HOBDAY

Quick crossword no. 348

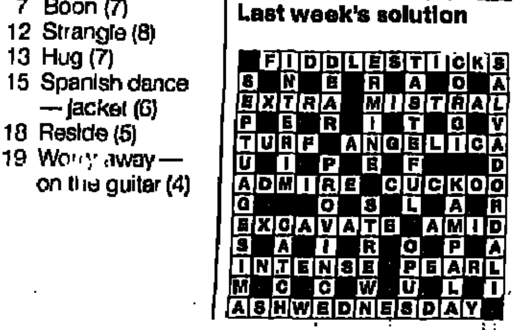
Across

1 Scottish dance (8,5)
8 Tank — tax (3)
9 Learned by heart (9)
10 Blithe (8)
11 Duck! It's Captain Hook's bosun! (4)
13 Principles (6)
14 Butted (6)
16 Lightning? Run! (4)
17 Glutton (8)
20 Loathsome (9)
21 Employ (3)
22 Scottish dance (9,4)

Down

1 Devastation (5)
2 Act unreservedly (2,3,5,3)
3 Comic verse — Irish port (8)
4 Halo — raincloud (6)
5 Well-established — business (4)
6 To some extent, (2,4,7)
7 Boon (7)
12 Strangle (8)
13 Hug (7)
15 Spanish dance — jacket (6)
18 Reside (5)
19 Worry away — on the guitar (4)

Last week's solution



Bridge Zia Mahmood

IF YOU'RE stuck for a New Year's resolution, try this one: "I will not treat my opponents as lunatics." Take the South cards on this deal from the 1996 Macallan Camrose series of home international matches, and see if you can put this philosophy into practice:

♠KJ94 ♥AJ72 ♦A ♣8764

This has been the bidding at love all:

South	West	North	East
		2♠(1)	No
4♠	4NT(2)	No	6♦
?			

(1) A weak two bid, showing about 4-9 points and a six-card spade suit.
(2) Showing a two-suited hand, either both minors or hearts and a minor.

Would you double? It seems the obvious course of action — but you should stop to consider a couple of points.

First of all, no one forced East to jump to six diamonds. He could have bid a simple five diamonds, unless he had good hopes that the slam would make. Second, what was East going to do if his partner's two suits had turned out to be clubs and hearts?

Judging by your powerful heart holding, it is unlikely that East was prepared to play in six hearts, so he must have been planning to play in seven clubs! In that case, he is likely to have a very distributional hand with excellent holdings in the minors, and it is quite likely that he has a void in hearts. If West turns out to have a void in spades, the England player who held the South hand doubled six diamonds without reflecting on either of these questions. He is a sadder and a wiser man now, for the full deal was:

North
♠A108532
♥Q64
♦5
♣QJ9

West
♠None
♥K109853
♦QJ9863
♣2

East
♠Q76
♥None
♦K10742
♣AK1053

South
♠KJ94
♥AJ72
♦A
♣8764

There was no defence to six diamonds doubled, and Scotland recorded the unusual score of 1,090. At the other table, the bidding took a different course:

South	West	North	East
		No	1♦(1)
D'ble	1♥	4♠	No
No	5♦	No	No
D'ble	No	No	No

(1) East-West were playing the Precision system, so this did not necessarily show diamond length.

West could not raise diamonds to a high level after South's takeout double, since East didn't have to have diamonds.

West was able to bid his diamonds naturally at his second turn, but it looked as though East and West were sacrificing, so East could not raise to six with any confidence. South doubled five diamonds, which made, with an overtrick, for a score of 650 to England.

The Scottish player must have been pleased to learn that his team had gained 10 IMPs on the board!

England won the match by 48 points to 42, while Wales beat Ireland by 47 to 43.

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Football FA Cup third round: Manchester United 2 Tottenham Hotspur 0

Listless United on a run again

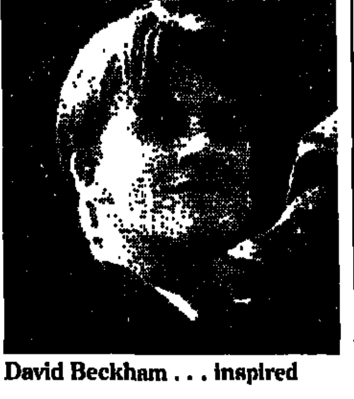
David Lacey

MANCHESTER United set off on another FA Cup run last Sunday with the slightly world-weary air of men for whom life had run out of surprises. They reached the fourth round with a predictable result but after an initially prosaic performance, with Eric Cantona again well below his best.

Two goals of undoubted quality, a smart piece of opportunism by Paul Scholes and an inspired free-kick from David Beckham, overcame the resistance of a Tottenham side made more stubborn by the loss of so many experienced players. Yet the unique winners of two Premiership and FA Cup doubles in three seasons have still not rediscovered their proper fluency.

Crewe or Wimbledon, and probably the latter, will visit Old Trafford in the next round. If the old chemistry has returned to United's play by then, manager Alex Ferguson might be in the running for a Nobel prize. But he is more likely to be among his Bunsens and gas jars, still searching for the right formula.

Andy Cole, out of the United side for so long, made his first start to a senior match since last year's Cup final, when he was replaced by Scholes after 65 minutes. This time he helped set up Scholes's goal but gave way to Solskjaer with just under 15 minutes left.



David Beckham . . . inspired

Although injuries and flu had deprived Spurs of Sheringham, Armstrong, Iversen and Anderton they were still well equipped for an exercise in containment. Gerry Francis had Sinton, a natural left-winger, in a more central role, which meant that until United scored they were often crowded out.

Once Tottenham had fallen behind, however, it was difficult to see how they could save the tie. Francis played two 19-year-olds, Allen and Fenn, up front and was rewarded with industrious displays from both. But eventually their inexperience showed, as did that of Carr when he was asked to produce an accurate centre.

Had Giggs, shrewdly timing his late run to meet Beckham's cross in the 25th minute, not headed straight at Walker, United would have been spared some angst. But within five minutes of the second half the game had swung United's way.

Cole, gathering a return pass from Beckham, found Scholes in space to his left. Scholes's shot evaded Walker's left hand and Old Trafford breathed more easily.

Even then Allen should have brought the scores level immediately, shooting wide from Fenn's centre. That turned out to be Tottenham's last hope. Ten minutes from the end Calderwood, who had already been cautioned, brought down Giggs near the 18-yard line and Beckham, taking an oblique run at the ball, swung the free-kick high into the top near corner.

Rugby Union Heineken European Cup semi-final: Leicester 37 Toulouse 11

French find the pace too tigerish

Robert Armstrong

LEICESTER cruised into the European clubs' final with so much turbo-charged power in all phases that it was hard to believe that their opponents, the defending champions, had dominated French rugby for the past three seasons.

A five-try victory in a major competition would be pleasing at the best of times; what made the Tigers' splendidly balanced performance doubly satisfying was the way they maintained pressure on a side studded with international players.

The Leicester captain, Dean Richards, denied that victory had been "comprehensive", pointing out that Toulouse had continued to battle with great tenacity until the final whistle.

Yet the scoreline offered indisputable evidence that the Tigers always called the shots that mattered. They were 17-3 ahead after 27 minutes, 25-6 after 48 and out of sight at 37-6 after 71. Leicester being Leicester, both Richards and the director of rugby Bob Dwyer preferred to talk down their historic achievement, reminding everyone that the hardest task would be winning the final at Cardiff Arms Park on January 25.

Pace has been the keynote of Leicester's transformation in recent weeks and it was fitting that their right-wing, Steve Hackney, should score the opening try with a thrilling 65-metre sprint that began on the right touchline and finished near the posts. Hackney was the beneficiary of a wild mispass by Castaignède that went to ground between Ougier and the wing Berty, who never had a hope of catching the Leicester man.

After 18 minutes Back scored at the posts courtesy of a slick overhead pass by Greenwood, and from then on the Tigers never looked back, draining the strength of the Toulouse pack at the set pieces and driving forward imperiously in the loose.

French organisation steadily disintegrated after a possible try by Dispagne was not awarded by the referee, Jim Fleming, who was unsighted, and Cazalbou was held up on the line soon afterwards.

Leicester consolidated their 20-6 half-time lead with further tries by Garforth, who tore the ball away from a maul before crashing over, and Healey, who scored at the right flag after an excellent build-up by Greenwood.

To make matters worse, Toulouse conceded a penalty try after collapsing a maul. It may not have been an easy win for the Tigers, but so practised was their control that they made it look so.

● In the other semi-final, Brive beat Cardiff 26-13 in an ill-tempered game which saw the Wales captain Johnathon Humphries sent off after 52 minutes for receiving two yellow cards.

Football results and league tables

FA Cup Third Round: Arsenal 1, Sunderland 1; Barnsley P, Oldham P; Blackburn 1, Port Vale 0; Brentford P, Man City P; Carlisle P, Tranmere P; Charlton 1, Newcastle 1; Chelsea 3, WBA 0; Chesterfield P, Bristol City P; Coventry P, Woking P; Crewe P, Wimbledon P; Crystal Palace P, Leeds P; Everton 3, Swindon 0; Gillingham P, Derby County P; Hednesford P, York P; Leicester P, Southend P; Liverpool 1, Burnley 0; Luton P, Bolton P; Man Utd 2, Tottenham 0; Middlesbrough 6, Chester 0; Norwich 1, Sheffield Utd 0; Notts County P, Aston Villa P; Plymouth 0, Peterborough 1; QPR 1, Huddersfield 1; Reading 3, Southampton 1; Sheffield Wednesday 7, Grimsby 1; Stevenage 0, Birmingham 2; Stoke P, Stockport P; Watford P, Oxford P; Wolves 1, Portsmouth 2; Wrexham 1, West Ham 1; Wycombe 0, Bradford City 2.

Tennents Scottish Cup Second Round: Ayr P, Clyde P; Berwick 2, Peterhead 1; Queen's Park 2, Gala Fairydean 1.

Nationwide League Third Division: Leyton Orient 2, Mansfield 1.

Bell's Scottish League Premier Division: Aberdeen 0, Dunfermline 2; Celtic 5, Motherwell 0; Dundee Utd 2, Kilmarnock 0; Hibernian 1, Rangers 2; Raith 1, Hearts 2.
First Division: Falkirk 1, Clydebank 1, Partick 1, Stirling Albion 1.

FA Carling Premiership

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Liverpool	22	12	6	4	38	20	42
Arsenal	21	11	7	3	39	20	40
Man Utd	21	10	8	3	42	25	38
Newcastle	21	11	4	6	38	22	37
Wimbledon	19	11	4	4	33	23	37
Aston Villa	21	10	5	6	26	19	35
Chelsea	21	9	8	4	33	29	35
Everton	21	7	7	7	29	23	28
Sheff Wed	20	6	10	4	21	22	28
Tottenham	20	8	4	8	22	26	28
Sunderland	21	6	6	9	21	30	24
Coventry	21	5	8	8	22	27	23
Derby	20	6	8	7	20	25	23
Leicester	20	6	5	9	20	27	23
Leeds	21	6	4	11	16	27	22
West Ham	20	5	6	9	18	28	21
Blackburn	20	4	8	8	10	22	20
Middlesbrough	21	4	6	11	25	40	18
Nottm Forest	21	3	8	10	19	36	17
Southampton	20	4	4	12	28	37	16

Nationwide League First Division

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bolton	27	14	10	3	55	37	52
Barnsley	25	13	8	4	44	27	47
Sheff Utd	26	13	7	6	44	28	46
Wolves	25	11	7	7	34	23	40
Crystal Palace	25	10	9	6	49	27	39
Norwich	26	11	6	9	35	45	39
Oxford Utd	26	10	7	9	37	29	37
QPR	26	10	7	9	35	35	37
Stoke	24	10	7	7	32	33	37
Port Vale	26	9	10	7	29	26	37
Tranmere	26	10	6	10	34	33	36
Huddersfield	27	9	8	10	32	35	35
Ipswich	27	8	10	9	34	[illegible]	34
Charlton	26	10	4	12	27	31	34
West Brom	26	7	12	7	42	42	33
Swindon	25	10	3	12	35	42	33
Portsmouth	27	9	6	12	30	32	33
Birmingham	23	8	9	6	24	22	33
Reading	26	7	8	11	28	37	29
Oldham	25	6	9	10	29	31	27
Man City	25	8	2	15	27	40	26
Southend	26	5	10	11	25	46	25
Bradford	27	5	8	14	24	44	23
Grimsby	24	5	7	12	28	44	22

Second Division

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Brentford	25	13	8	4	41	25	47
Luton	24	14	4	6	43	28	46
Bury	24	11	9	4	36	23	42
Millwall	25	11	8	6	33	26	41
Stockport	25	11	8	6	32	27	41
Bristol City	25	11	7	7	43	26	40
Burnley	25	12	4	9	38	28	40
Crewe	24	13	1	10	34	27	40
Watford	24	9	12	3	25	19	39
Wrexham	23	10	8	5	31	27	38
Chesterfield	23	11	5	7	23	18	38
Shrewsbury	27	8	8	11	35	43	32
Blackpool	25	7	10	8	28	28	31
Walsall	24	8	6	10	26	28	30
Bournemouth	26	8	6	12	23	31	30
Bristol Rovers	25	7	8	10	26	29	29
Preston	25	8	5	12	24	29	29
York	24	8	5	11	24	34	29
Peterborough	25	6	9	10	37	43	27
Plymouth	25	6	9	10	29	38	27
Gillingham	26	7	6	13	25	36	27
Wycombe	25	6	5	14	22	38	23
Notts County	24	5	7	12	15	26	22
Rotherham	24	3	8	13	20	36	17

Third Division

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Fulham	25	16	5	4	40	18	53
Carlisle	26	15	7	4	40	24	52
Cambridge Utd	25	14	5	6	37	30	47
Wigan	24	13	5	6	43	28	44
Northampton	27	11	7	9	40	29	40
Swansea	25	11	5	9	28	27	38
Cardiff	25	11	4	10	28	30	37
Torquay	27	11	4	12	28	30	37
Chester	23	10	6	7	27	25	36
Hull	26	8	12	6	26	28	36
Leyton Orient	26	9	8	9	24	23	35
Colchester	25	7	13	5	36	30	34
Scunthorpe	25	10	4	11	36	37	34
Scarborough	25	8	10	7	33	32	34
Barnet	25	8	9	8	25	22	33
Hartlepool	26	9	5	12	31	33	32
Lincoln	25	8	7	10	31	38	31
Exeter	26	8	6	12	26	35	30
Rochdale	23	7	8	8	29	20	29
Mansfield	24	6	11	7	25	25	29
Doncaster	24	7	3	14	26	38	24
Darlington	25	6	5	14	34	45	23
Hereford	26	6	5	15	26	38	23
Brighton	27	4	6	17	24	48	18

Bells Scottish League Premier Division

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Rangers	21	17	2	2	55	19	53
Celtic	19	12	3	4	45	21	39
Dundee Utd	22	9	6	7	28	19	33
Hearts	22	9	6	7	33	31	33
Aberdeen	22	8	6	8	[illegible]	[illegible]	30
Dunfermline	21	8	5	8	[illegible]	[illegible]	29
Hibernian	22	[illegible]	5	11	23	[illegible]	23
Kilmarnock	19	6	2	11	[illegible]	[illegible]	20
Motherwell	21	[illegible]	6	11	[illegible]	[illegible]	18
Raith	21	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	15

First Division

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
St Johnstone	20	15	2	4	47	13	47
Dundee	20	9	7	4	28	12	34
Airdrie	19	8	8	3	41	19	32
St Mirren	19	9	3	[illegible]	30	23	30
Partick	20	7	8	5	31	23	29
Falkirk	19	8	4	7	19	19	28
Gr Morton	19	7	6	6	22	18	27
Clydebank	21	5	4	12	18	34	19
Stirling Albion	21	4	6	11	25	39	18
East Fife	20	1	4	15	12	50	7

Second Division

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Livingston	19	12	5	2	32	16	41
Ayr	18	12	2	4	32	20	38
Hamilton	17	10	4	3	34	14	34
Clyde	17	7	5	5	22	20	26
Stenhousemuir	17	6	5	6	23	13	23
Queen of South	18	6	5	7	28	32	23
Brechin	19	4	7	8	20	27	19
Stranraer	18	5	4	9	16	25	19
Dumbarton	19	4	5	10	22	36	17
Berwick	20	1	6	13	20	46	9

Third Division

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Inverness	18	10	5	3	32	21	35
Ross County	19	9	3	7	30	25	30
Montrose	20	9	3	8	32	34	30
Forfar	17	8	4	5	33	25	28
Alloa	17	8	4	5	27	23	28
Cowdenbeath	19	7	3	9	24	23	24
Albion	17	6	6	5	21	19	24
Queen's Park	18	5	5	8	26	31	20
Arbroath	19	4	6	9	16	27	18
East Stirling	18	3	5	10	15	28	14

Sports Diary Shiv Sharma

Sportsmen honoured

ALEC BEDSER, former England Test cricketer and pillar of the MCC establishment, heads the New Year Honours' List for sport with the award of a knighthood for his services to the game. Bedser, who follows Len Hutton and Colin Cowdrey as a cricketing knight, took 236 wickets in 51 Tests and was chairman of selectors for 13 years.

Damon Hill's highly successful year was acknowledged with the award of an OBE. Hill won eight Formula One grand prix races in 1996 to clinch the world championship after twice finishing runner-up. He was subsequently voted BBC Sports Personality for the second time in three years. Britain's most successful Olympian, Steve Redgrave, who won his fourth successive gold medal at the Atlanta Games, for rowing, added a CBE to his collection of honours. Redgrave received an OBE in 1986 and this latest achievement was marked by a second award.

Martin Offiah is the latest rugby star to be honoured — he got an MBE. Offiah was Rugby League's top try scorer for six successive seasons during spells with Widnes and Wigan. There is also an MBE for David Seaman, England's goalkeeper.

SNOW, Siberian winds, frost and freezing conditions, which severely disrupted the traditional New Year's Day fixture list, badly hit sport again last weekend causing the postponement of 24 English football matches and five Scottish Cup clashes. Among the games that were put in the deep-freeze were a dozen FA Cup third-round ties and five Premiership games. The Rugby Union pitches at Gloucester and Orrell were declared unplayable in Courage League One while the lower divisions and the leagues in Wales and Scotland also suffered widespread postponements. Racing, too, was badly affected.

CYCLING legend Miguel Indurain has quit the sport he dominated for years. The all-conquering Spaniard announced his retirement at a packed press conference in a Pamplona hotel last week. The only rider to win the Tour de France five years in succession, he politely wished everybody a happy new year and said he was retiring from professional cycling with immediate effect.

Indurain added that his decision was made nearly a year ago but the announcement was delayed, and events during 1996 did nothing to change his mind. "Even though I felt good in the spring, I thought it was time to move on. I made an immense effort to win the Tour but it was impossible," he said. Indurain's other triumphs — his two wins in the Tour of Italy, his Olympic gold medal and world championship time-trial successes — were overshadowed by his Tour successes.

INDIA lost the second Test against South Africa by 282 runs in Cape Town on Monday. South Africa declared on 529 for 7, but centuries from Mohammad Azharuddin and captain Sachin Tendulkar took the score to 359 and helped the tourists avoid the follow on. India needed another big score from its batsmen to ward off defeat after the Springboks closed their second innings on 256-6 but failed, leaving them 2-0 down in the series.

THE world of cricket was stunned by the death of 25-year-old Surrey wicketkeeper Graham Kersey. He suffered head injuries in a car crash in Brisbane on Christmas Eve and died on New Year's Day. Kersey was voted his county's Player of the Year in 1995 and was capped last September.

Surrey's captain Alec Stewart, who is on tour of Zimbabwe and New Zealand with the England party, said: "We have lost not only a great cricketer but also a tremendous team man."